

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BY THE

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CONTENTS OF VOLUME III.

SERMON LVII.	
<i>On the Fall of Man</i>	PAGE 7
"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—GEN. iii. 19.	
SERMON LVIII.	
<i>On Predestination</i>	21
"Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son:—whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—ROM. viii. 29, 30.	
SERMON LIX.	
<i>God's Love to Fallen Man</i>	28
"Not as the offence, so also is the free gift."—ROM. v. 15.	
SERMON LX.	
<i>The General Deliverance</i>	42
"The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. "For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected it. "Yet in hope that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now."—ROM. viii. 19-22.	
SERMON LXI.	
<i>The Mystery of Iniquity</i>	57
"The mystery of iniquity doth already work."—2 THESS. ii. 7.	
SERMON LXII.	
<i>The End of Christ's Coming</i>	75
"For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."—1 JOHN iii. 8.	
SERMON LXIII.	
<i>The General Spread of the Gospel</i>	89
"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."—ISA. xi. 9.	

SERMON LXIV.		PAGE
<i>The New Creation</i>		103
"Behold, I make all things new."—REV. xxi. 5.		
SERMON LXV.		
<i>The Duty of Reproving our Neighbour</i>		113
"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."—LEV. xix. 17.		
SERMON LXVI.		
<i>The Signs of the Times</i>		123
"Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"—MATT. xvi. 3.		
SERMON LXVII.		
<i>On Divine Providence</i>		134
"Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."—LUKE xii. 7.		
SERMON LXVIII.		
<i>The Wisdom of God's Counsels</i>		149
"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"—ROM. xi. 33.		
SERMON LXIX.		
<i>The Imperfection of Human Knowledge</i>		164
"We know in part."—1 COR. xiii. 9.		
SERMON LXX.		
<i>The case of Reason Impartially Considered</i>		182
"Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."—1 COR. xiv. 20.		
SERMON LXXI.		
<i>Of Good Angels</i>		196
"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?"—HEB. i. 14.		
SERMON LXXII.		
<i>Of Evil Angels</i>		207
"We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places."—EPA. vi. 12.		

SERMON LXXIII.

PAGE

<i>Of Hell</i>	220
“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”— MARK ix. 48.	

SERMON LXXIV.

<i>Of the Church</i>	234
“I beseech you that ye walk worthily of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”—EPH. iv. 1-6.	

SERMON LXXV.

<i>On Schism</i>	245
“That there might be no schism in the body.”—1 COR. xii. 25.	

SERMON LXXVI.

<i>On Perfection</i>	256
“Let us go on unto perfection.”—HEB. vi. 1.	

SERMON LXXVII.

<i>Spiritual Worship</i>	274
“This is the true God, and eternal life.”—1 JOHN v. 20.	

SERMON LXXVIII.

<i>Spiritual Idolatry</i>	287
“Little children, keep yourselves from idols”—1 JOHN v. 21.	

SERMON LXXIX.

<i>On Dissipation</i>	298
“This I speak—that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction.”—1 COR. vii. 35.	

SERMON LXXX.

<i>On Friendship with the World</i>	308
“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore desireth to be a friend of the world is an enemy of God.”—JAMES iv. 4.	

SERMON LXXXI.

<i>In what Sense we are to Leave the World</i>	322
“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, “And I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”—2 COR. vi. 17, 18.	

	PAGE
SERMON LXXXII.	
<i>On Temptation</i>	336
<p>"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."—1 COR. x. 13.</p>	
SERMON LXXXIII.	
<i>On Patience</i>	347
<p>"Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."—JAMES i. 4.</p>	
SERMON LXXXIV	
<i>The Important Question</i>	357
<p>"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"—MATT. xvi. 26.</p>	
SERMON LXXXV	
<i>On Working out our own Salvation</i>	372
<p>"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."—PHILIP. ii. 12, 13.</p>	
SERMON LXXXVI.	
<i>A Call to Backsliders</i>	382
<p>"Will the Lord absent himself for ever? And will he be no more entreated? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? And is his promise come utterly to an end for evermore?"—Ps. lxxvii. 7, 8.</p>	
SERMON LXXXVII.	
<i>The Danger of Riches</i>	400
<p>"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."—1 TIM. vi. 9.</p>	
SERMON LXXXVIII.	
<i>On Dress</i>	417
<p>"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of—wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel! But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."—1 PET. iii. 3, 4.</p>	
SERMON LXXXIX.	
<i>The more Excellent Way</i>	431
<p>"Covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show unto you a more excellent way."—1 COR. xii. 31.</p>	

SERMON LVII.

ON THE FALL OF MAN.

"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

GEN. iii. 19.

1. WHY is there *pain* in the world; seeing God is "loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works?" Because there is sin: had there been no sin, there would have been no pain. But pain (supposing God to be just) is the necessary effect of sin. But why is there sin in the world? Because man was created in the image of God; because he is not mere matter, a clod of earth, a lump of clay, without sense or understanding, but a spirit like his Creator, a being endued not only with sense and understanding, but also with a will exerting itself in various affections. To crown all the rest, he was endued with liberty; a power of directing his own affections and actions; a capacity of determining himself, or of choosing good or evil. Indeed, had not man been endued with this, all the rest would have been of no use: had he not been a free as well as an intelligent being, his understanding would have been as incapable of holiness, or any kind of virtue, as a tree or a block of marble. And having this power, a power of choosing good or evil, he chose the latter: he chose evil. Thus "sin entered into the world," and pain of every kind, preparatory to death.

2. But this plain, simple account of the origin of evil, whether natural or moral, all the wisdom of man could not discover till it pleased God to reveal it to the world. Till then man was a mere enigma to himself; a riddle which none but God could solve. And in how full and satisfactory a manner has he solved it in this chapter! In such a manner as does not indeed serve to gratify vain curiosity, but as is abundantly sufficient to answer a nobler end; to

“Justify the ways of God with men.”

To this great end I would, first, briefly consider the preceding part of this chapter; and then, secondly, more particularly weigh the solemn words which have been already recited.

I. 1. In the first place, let us briefly consider the preceding part of this chapter. “Now the serpent was more subtile,” or intelligent, “than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made;” (verse 1;)—endued with more understanding than any other animal in the brute creation. Indeed, there is no improbability in the conjecture of an ingenious man,* that the serpent was endued with reason, which is now the property of man. And this accounts for a circumstance which, on any other supposition, would be utterly unintelligible. How comes Eve not to be surprised, yea, startled and affrighted, at hearing the serpent *speake* and *reason*; unless she knew that reason, and speech in consequence of it, were the original properties of the serpent? Hence, without showing any surprise, she immediately enters into conversation with him. “And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” See how he, who was a liar from the beginning, mixes truth and falsehood together! Perhaps on purpose, that she might be the more inclined to speak, in order to clear God of the unjust charge. Accordingly, the woman said unto the serpent, (verse 2,)

* The late Dr. Nicholas Robinson.

"We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: out of the tree in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." Thus far she appears to have been clear of blame. But how long did she continue so? "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Verses 4, 5.) Here sin began: namely, unbelief. "The woman was deceived," says the apostle. She believed a lie: she gave more credit to the word of the devil than to the word of God. And unbelief brought forth actual sin: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit, and did eat;" and so completed her sin. But "the man," as the apostle observes, "was not deceived." How then, came he to join in the transgression? "She gave unto her husband, and he did eat." He sinned with his eyes open. He rebelled against his Creator, as is highly probable,

"Not by stronger reason moved,
But fondly overcome with female charms."

And if this was the case, there is no absurdity in the assertion of a great man, "that Adam sinned in his heart before he sinned outwardly; before he ate of the forbidden fruit;" namely, by inward idolatry, by loving the creature more than the Creator.

2. Immediately, pain followed sin. When he lost his innocence, he lost his happiness. He painfully feared that God, in the love of whom his supreme happiness before consisted. "He said," (verse 10,) "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." He fled from Him, who was, till then, his desire and glory and joy. He "hid himself from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." Hid himself! What! from the all-seeing eye? the eye which, with one glance, pervades heaven and earth? See how his understanding

likewise was impaired ! What amazing folly was this ! such as one would imagine very few, even of his posterity, could have fallen into. So dreadfully was his "foolish heart darkened" by sin, and guilt, and sorrow, and fear. His innocence was lost, and, at the same time, his happiness and his wisdom. Here is the clear, intelligible answer to that question, "How came evil into the world?"

3. One cannot but observe, throughout this whole narration, the inexpressible tenderness and lenity of the almighty Creator, from whom they had revolted, the Sovereign against whom they had rebelled. "And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?"—thus graciously calling him to return, who would otherwise have eternally fled from God. "And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked." Still here is no acknowledgment of his fault, no humiliation for it. But with what astonishing tenderness does God lead him to make that acknowledgment ! "And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked?" How camest thou to make this discovery ? "Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" "And the man said," still unhumiliated, yea, indirectly throwing the blame upon God himself, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." "And the Lord God," still in order to bring them to repentance, "said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done?" (Verse 13.) "And the woman said," nakedly declaring the thing as it was, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." "And the Lord God said unto the serpent," to testify his utter abhorrence of sin, by a lasting monument of his displeasure, in punishing the creature that had been barely the instrument of it, "Thou art cursed above the cattle, and above every beast of the field. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Thus, in the midst of

judgment hath God remembered mercy, from the beginning of the world ; connecting the grand promise of salvation with the very sentence of condemnation !

4. "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and" (or in) "thy conception : in sorrow" (or pain) "thou shalt bring forth children ;"—yea, above any other creature under heaven ; which original curse we see is entailed on her latest posterity. "And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." It seems, the latter part of this sentence is explanatory of the former. Was there, till now, any other inferiority of the woman to the man than that which we may conceive in one angel to another ? "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, 'Thou shalt not eat of it ; cursed is the ground for thy sake. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee :'"—useless, yea, and hurtful productions ; whereas, nothing calculated to hurt or give pain had, at first, any place in the creation. "And thou shalt eat the herb of the field :"—coarse and vile, compared to the delicious fruits of paradise ! "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground : for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

II. 1. Let us now, in the second place, weigh these solemn words in a more particular manner. "Dust thou art :—" but how fearfully and wonderfully wrought into innumerable fibres, nerves, membranes, muscles, arteries, veins, vessels of various kinds ! And how amazingly is this dust connected with water, with enclosed, circulating fluids, diversified a thousand ways by a thousand tubes and strainers ! Yea, and how wonderfully is air impacted into every part, solid or fluid, of the animal machine ; air, not elastic, which would tear the machine in pieces, but as fixed as water under the pole ! But all this would not avail, were not ethereal fire intimately mixed both with this earth, air,

and water. And all these elements are mingled together in the most exact proportion; so that while the body is in health, no one of them predominates, in the least degree, over the others.

2. Such was man, with regard to his corporeal part, as he came out of the hands of his Maker. But since he sinned, he is not only dust, but mortal, corruptible dust. And by sad experience we find, that this "corruptible body presses down the soul." It very frequently hinders the soul in its operations; and, at best, serves it very imperfectly. Yet the soul cannot dispense with its service, imperfect as it is: for an imbodied spirit cannot form one thought but by the mediation of its bodily organs. For thinking is not, as many suppose, the act of a pure spirit; but the act of a spirit connected with a body, and playing upon a set of material keys. It cannot possibly, therefore, make any better music than the nature and state of its instruments allow it. Hence, every disorder of the body, especially of the parts more immediately subservient to thinking, lays an almost insuperable bar in the way of its thinking justly. Hence the maxim received in all ages, *Humanum est errare et nescire*,—"Not ignorance alone," (that belongs, more or less, to every creature in heaven and earth; seeing none is omniscient, none knoweth all things save the Creator,) "but error is entailed on every child of man." Mistake, as well as ignorance, is, in our present state, inseparable from humanity. Every child of man is in a thousand mistakes, and is liable to fresh mistakes every moment. And a mistake in judgment may occasion a mistake in practice; yea, naturally leads thereto. I mistake, and possibly cannot avoid mistaking, the character of this or that man. I suppose him to be what he is not; to be better or worse than he really is. Upon this wrong supposition, I behave wrong to him; that is, more or less affectionately than he deserves. And by the mistake which is occasioned by the defect of my bodily organs I am naturally led so to do. Such is the present condition of human na-

ture; of a mind dependent on a mortal body. Such is the state entailed on all human spirits, while connected with flesh and blood!

3. "And unto dust thou shalt return." How admirably well has the wise Creator secured the execution of this sentence on all the offspring of Adam! It is true He was pleased to make one exception from this general rule, in a very early age of the world, in favour of an eminently righteous man. So we read, Gen. v. 23, 24, after Enoch had "walked with God" three hundred sixty and five years, "he was not; for God took him:" he exempted him from the sentence passed upon all flesh, and took him alive into heaven. Many ages after, he was pleased to make a second exception; ordering the prophet Elijah to be taken up into heaven, in a chariot of fire,—very probably by a convoy of angels, assuming that appearance. And it is not unlikely that he saw good to make a third exception in the person of the beloved disciple. There is transmitted to us a particular account of the apostle John's old age; but we have not any account of his death, and not the least intimation concerning it. Hence we may reasonably suppose that he did not die, but that, after he had finished his course, and "walked with God" for about a hundred years, the Lord "took him," as he did Enoch; not in so open and conspicuous a manner as he did the prophet Elijah.

4. But setting these two or three instances aside, who has been able, in the course of near six thousand years, to evade the execution of this sentence, passed on Adam and all his posterity? Be men ever so great masters of the art of healing, can they prevent or heal the gradual decays of nature? Can all their boasted skill heal old age, or hinder dust from returning to dust? Nay, who among the greatest masters of medicine has been able to add a century to his own years? yea, or to protract his own life any considerable space beyond the common period? The days of man, for above three thousand years, (from the time of Moses at least,) have been fixed, by a middling computation, at threescore

years and ten. How few are there that attain to four-score years ! Perhaps hardly one in five hundred. Sc little does the art of man avail against the appointment of God !

5. God has indeed provided for the execution of his own decree in the very principles of our nature. It is well known, the human body, when it comes into the world, consists of innumerable membranes exquisitely thin, that are filled with circulating fluids, to which the solid parts bear a very small proportion. Into the tubes, composed of these membranes, nourishment must be continually infused ; otherwise life cannot continue, but will come to an end almost as soon as it is begun. And suppose this nourishment to be liquid, which, as it flows through those fine canals, continually enlarges them in all their dimensions ; yet it contains innumerable solid particles, which continually adhere to the inner surface of the vessels through which they flow ; so that in the same proportion as any vessel is enlarged, it is stiffened also. Thus the body grows firmer as it grows larger, from infancy to manhood. In twenty, five-and-twenty, or thirty years, it attains its full measure of firmness. Every part of the body is then stiffened to its full degree ; as much earth adhering to all the vessels, as gives the solidity they severally need to the nerves, arteries, veins, muscles, in order to exercise their functions in the most perfect manner. For twenty, or it may be thirty years following, although more and more particles of earth continually adhere to the inner surface of every vessel in the body, yet the stiffness caused thereby is hardly observable, and occasions little inconvenience. But after sixty years (more or less, according to the natural constitution, and a thousand accidental circumstances) the change is easily perceived, even at the surface of the body. Wrinkles show the proportion of the fluids to be lessened, as does also the dryness of the skin, through a diminution of the blood and juices, which before moistened and kept it smooth and soft. The extremities of the body

grow cold, not only as they are remote from the centre of motion, but as the smaller vessels are filled up, and can no longer admit the circulating fluid. As age increases, fewer and fewer of the vessels are pervious, and capable of transmitting the vital stream ; except the larger ones, most of which are lodged within the trunk of the body. In extreme old age, the arteries themselves, the grand instruments of circulation, by the continual apposition of earth, become hard, and, as it were, bony, till, having lost the power of contracting themselves, they can no longer propel the blood, even through the largest channels ; in consequence of which, death naturally ensues. Thus are the seeds of death sown in our very nature ! Thus from the very hour when we first appear on the stage of life, we are travelling toward death ; we are preparing, whether we will or no, to return to the dust from whence we came !

6. Let us now take a short review of the whole, as it is delivered with inimitable simplicity ; what an unprejudiced person might even from hence infer to be the word of God. In that period of duration which he saw to be most proper, (of which He alone could be the judge whose eye views the whole possibility of things from everlasting to everlasting,) the Almighty, rising in the greatness of his strength, went forth to create the universe. “ In the beginning he created,” made out of nothing, “ the matter of the heavens and the earth :” (so, Mr. Hutchinson observes, the original words properly signify :) then “ the Spirit” or breath “ from the Lord,” that is, the air, “ moved upon the face of the waters.” Here were earth, water, air : three of the elements, or component parts of the lower world. “ And God said, Let there be light : and there was light.” By his omnific word, light, that is, fire, the fourth element sprang into being. Out of these, variously modified and proportioned to each other, he composed the whole universe. “ The earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed, and the tree yielding fruit after his kind ;” and then the various tribes of

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animals, to inhabit the waters, the air, and the earth. But the very heathen could observe,

Sanctius his animal, mentisque capacius altæ
Deerat adhuc !

There was still wanting a creature of a higher rank, capable of wisdom and holiness. *Natus homo est.* So "God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him!" Mark the emphatical repetition, God did not make him mere matter, a piece of senseless, unintelligent clay; but a spirit, like himself, although clothed with a material vehicle. As such, he was endued with understanding; with a will, including various affections; and with liberty, a power of using them in a right or wrong manner, of choosing good or evil. Otherwise neither his understanding nor his will would have been to any purpose; for he must have been as incapable of virtue or holiness as the stock of a tree. Adam, in whom all mankind were then contained, freely preferred evil to good. He chose to do his own will, rather than the will of his Creator. He "was not deceived," but knowingly and deliberately rebelled against his Father and his King. In that moment he lost the moral image of God, and, in part, the natural: he commenced, unholy, foolish, and unhappy. And "in Adam all died:" he entitled all his posterity to error, guilt, sorrow, fear, pain, diseases, and death.

7. How exactly does matter of fact, do all things round us, even the face of the whole world, agree with this account! Open your eyes! Look round you! See darkness that may be felt; see ignorance and error; see vice in ten thousand forms; see consciousness of guilt, fear, sorrow, shame, remorse, covering the face of the earth! See misery, the daughter of sin! See, on every side, sickness and pain, inhabitants of every nation under heaven; driving on the poor, helpless sons of men, in every age, to the gates of death! So they have done wellnigh from the beginning of the world. So they will do, till the consummation of all things.

8. But can the Creator despise the work of his own

hands? Surely that is impossible! Hath he not then, seeing he alone is able, provided a remedy for all these evils? Yea, verily he hath! And a sufficient remedy, every way adequate to the disease. He hath fulfilled his word: he hath given "the seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head."—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Here is a remedy provided for all our guilt: he "bore all our sins in his body on the tree." And "if any one have sinned, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And here is a remedy for all our disease, all the corruption of our nature. For God hath also, through the intercession of his Son, given us his Holy Spirit, to renew us both "in knowledge," in his natural image;—opening the eyes of our understanding, and enlightening us with all such knowledge as is requisite to our pleasing God;—and also in his moral image, namely, "righteousness and true holiness." And supposing this is done, we know that "all things" will "work together for our good." We know by happy experience, that all natural evils change their nature and turn to good; that sorrow, sickness, pain, will all prove medicines, to heal our spiritual sickness. They will all be to our profit; will all tend to our unspeakable advantage; making us more largely "partakers of his holiness," while we remain on earth; adding so many stars to that crown which is reserved in heaven for us.

9. Behold, then, both the justice and merey of God!—his *justice* in punishing sin, the sin of him in whose loins we were then all contained, on Adam and his whole posterity;—and his *mercy* in providing an universal remedy for an universal evil; in appointing the Second Adam to die for all who had died in the first; that "as in Adam all died, so in Christ all" might "be made alive;" that, "as by one man's offence, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, so by the righteousness of one, the free gift" might "come upon all unto justification of life,"—"justification of *life*," as being con-

nected with the new birth, the beginning of spiritual life, which leads us, through the life of holiness, to life eternal, to glory.

10. And it should be particularly observed, that "where sin abounded, grace does much more abound." For not as the condemnation, so is the free gift; but we may gain infinitely more than we have lost. We may now attain both higher degrees of holiness, and higher degrees of glory, than it would have been possible for us to attain. If Adam had not sinned, the Son of God had not died: consequently, that amazing instance of the love of God to man: had never existed, which has, in all ages, excited the highest joy, and love, and gratitude from his children. We might have loved God the Creator, God the Preserver, God the Governor; but there would have been no place for love to God the Redeemer. This could have had no being. The highest glory and joy of saints on earth, and saints in heaven, Christ crucified, had been wanting. We could not then have praised him that, thinking it no robbery to be equal with God, yet emptied himself, took upon him the form of a servant, and was obedient to death, even the death of the cross! This is now the noblest theme of all the children of God on earth; yea, we need not scruple to affirm, even of the angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven.

"Hallelujah they ery,
To the King of the sky,
To the great everlasting I AM;
To the Lamb that was slain,
And liveth again,
Hallelujah to God and the Lamb!"

HYMNS.

I.

UPRIGHT, both in heart and will,
 We by our God were made ;
 But we turn'd from good to ill,
 And o'er the creature stray'd ;
 Multiplied our wandering thought,
 Which first was fixed on God alone ;
 In ten thousand objects sought
 The bliss we lost in one.

From our own inventions vain
 Of fancied happiness,
 Draw us to thyself again,
 And bid our wanderings cease ;
 Jesus, speak our souls restored,
 By love's divine simplicity ;
 Reunited in our Lord,
 And wholly lost in thee.

II.

ENSLAVED to sense, to pleasure prone,
 Fond of created good ;
 Father, our helplessness we own,
 And trembling taste our food.

Trembling, we taste : for, ah ! no more
 To thee the creatures lead :
 Changed, they exert a baneful power,
 And poison while they feed.

Cursed for the sake of wretched man,
They now engross him whole ;
With pleasing force on earth detain,
And sensualize his soul.

Grov'ling on earth we still must lie,
Till Christ the curse repeal ;
Till Christ, descending from on high,
Infected nature heal.

Come, then, our heavenly Adam, come,
Thy healing influence give :
Hallow our food, reverse our doom,
And bid us eat, and live !

The bondage of corruption break ;
For this our spirits groan ;
Thy only will we fain would seek,
Oh save us from our own !

Turn the full stream of nature's tide ;
Let all our actions tend
To thee their Source : thy love the guide,
Thy glory be the end.

Earth then a scale to heaven shall be ;
Sense shall point out the road ;
The creatures all shall lead to thee,
And all we taste be God.

SERMON LVIII.

ON PREDESTINATION.

“Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son:—whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”—Rom. viii. 29, 30.

1. “OUR beloved brother Paul,” says St. Peter, “according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” (2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.)

2. It is not improbable, that among those things spoken by St. Paul, which are hard to be understood, the apostle Peter might place what he speaks on this subject in the eighth and ninth chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. And it is certain, not only the unlearned, but many of the most learned men in the world, and not the “unstable” only, but many who seemed to be well established in the truths of the gospel, have, for several centuries, “wrested” these passages “to their own destruction.”

3. “Hard to be understood” we may well allow them to be, when we consider how men of the strongest understanding, improved by all the advantages of education, have continually differed in judgment concerning them. And this very consideration, that there is so wide a difference upon the head between men of the greatest learning, sense, and piety, one might imagine would make all who now speak upon the subject ex

ceedingly wary and self-diffident. But I know not how it is, that just the reverse is observed in every part of the Christian world. No writers upon earth appear more positive than those who write on this difficult subject. Nay, the same men who, writing upon any other subject, are remarkably modest and humble, on this alone lay aside all self-distrust,

“And speak *ex cathedrâ* infallible.”

This is peculiarly observable of almost all those who assert the absolute decrees. But surely it is possible to avoid this: whatever we propose, may be proposed with modesty, and with deference to those wise and good men who are of a contrary opinion; and the rather, because so much has been said already on every part of the question, so many volumes have been written, that it is scarcely possible to say any thing which has not been said before. All I would offer at present, not to the lovers of contention, but to men of piety and candour, are a few short hints, which perhaps may cast some light on the text above recited.

4. The more frequently and carefully I have considered it, the more I have been inclined to think that the apostle is not here (as many have supposed) describing a chain of causes and effects; (this does not seem to have entered into his heart;) but simply showing *the method in which God works; the order in which the several branches of salvation constantly follow each other.* And this, I apprehend, will be clear to any serious and impartial inquirer, surveying the work of God either forward or backward; either from the beginning to the end, or from the end to the beginning.

5. And, first, let us look forward on the whole work of God in the salvation of man; considering it from the beginning, the first point, till it terminates in glory. The first point is, the foreknowledge of God. God *foreknew* those in every nation who would believe, from the beginning of the world to the consummation of all things. But, in order to throw light upon this dark question, it should be well observed, that when we

speak of God's foreknowledge, we do not speak according to the nature of things, but after the manner of men. For, if we speak properly, there is no such thing as either fore-knowledge or after-knowledge in God. All time, or rather all eternity, (for time is only that small fragment of eternity which is allotted to the children of men,) being present to him at once, he does not know one thing before another, or one thing after another; but sees all things in one point of view from everlasting to everlasting. As all time, with every thing that exists therein, is present with him at once, so he sees at once whatever was, is, or will be, to the end of time. But observe: we must not think they are because he knows them. No; he knows them because they are. Just as I (if one may be allowed to compare the things of men with the deep things of God) now know the sun shines: yet the sun does not shine because I know it, but I know it because he shines. My knowledge supposes the sun to shine, but does not in any wise cause it. In like manner, God knows that man sins; for he knows all things: yet we do not sin because he knows it, but he knows it because we sin; and his knowledge supposes our sin, but does not in any wise cause it. In a word, God, looking on all ages, from the creation to the consummation, as a moment, and seeing at once whatever is in the hearts of all the children of men, knows every one that does or does not believe, in every age or nation. Yet what he knows, whether faith or unbelief, is in no wise caused by his knowledge. Men are as free in believing or not believing as if he did not know it at all.

6. Indeed, if man were not free, he could not be accountable either for his thoughts, words, or actions. If he were not free, he would not be capable either of reward or punishment; he would be incapable either of virtue or vice, of being either morally good or bad. If he had no more freedom than the sun, the moon, or the stars, he would be no more accountable than they. On supposition that he had no more freedom than them, the stones of the earth would be as capable of reward, and

as liable to punishment, as man : one would be as accountable as the other. Yea, and it would be as absurd to ascribe either virtue or vice to him as to ascribe it to the stock of a tree.

7. But to proceed : “Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” This is the second step : (to speak after the manner of men : for in fact, there is nothing *before* or *after* in God :) in other words, God decrees, from everlasting to everlasting, that all who believe in the Son of his love shall be conformed to his image ; shall be saved from all inward and outward sin, into all inward and outward holiness. Accordingly, it is a plain, undeniable fact, all who truly believe in the name of the Son of God do now “receive the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls ;” and this in virtue of the unchangeable, irreversible, irresistible decree of God :—“He that believeth shall be saved ;” “he that believeth not shall be damned.”

8. “Whom he did predestinate, them he also called.” This is the third step, (still remembering that we speak after the manner of men.) To express it a little more largely : According to his fixed decree, that believers shall be saved, those whom he foreknows as such, he calls both outwardly and inwardly,—*outwardly* by the word of his grace, and *inwardly* by his Spirit. This inward application of his word to the heart seems to be what some term “effectual calling :” and it implies, the calling them children of God ; the accepting them “in the Beloved ;” the justifying them “freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.”

9. “Whom he called, them he justified.” This is the fourth step. It is generally allowed that the word “justified” here is taken in a peculiar sense ; that it means, he made them just or righteous. He executed his decree, “conforming them to the image of his Son ;” or, as we usually speak, sanctified them.

10. It remains, “Whom he justified, them he also glorified.” This is the last step. Having made them

“meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” he gives them “the kingdom which was prepared for them before the world began.” This is the order wherein, “according to the counsel of his will,” the plan he has laid down from eternity, he saves those whom he foreknew; the true believers in every place and generation.

11. The same great work of salvation by faith, according to the foreknowledge and decree of God, may appear in a still clearer light, if we view it backward, from the end to the beginning. Suppose then, you stood with the “great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation, and tongue, and kindred, and people,” who “give praise unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever;” you would not find one among them all that were entered into glory, who was not a witness of that great truth, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord;” not one of all that innumerable company who was not sanctified before he was glorified. By holiness he was prepared for glory; according to the invariable will of the Lord, that the crown, purchased by the blood of his Son, should be given to none but those who are renewed by his Spirit. He is become “the author of eternal salvation” only “to them that obey him;” that obey him inwardly and outwardly; that are holy in heart, and holy in all manner of conversation.

12. And could you take a view of all those upon earth who are now sanctified, you would find not one of these had been sanctified till after he was called. He was first called, not only with an outward call, by the word and the messengers of God, but likewise with an inward call, by his Spirit applying his word, enabling him to believe in the only begotten Son of God, and bearing testimony with his spirit that he was a child of God. And it was by this very means they were all sanctified. It was by a sense of the love of God shed abroad in his heart, that every one of them was enabled to love God. Loving God, he loved his neighbour as himself, and had

power to walk in all his commandments blameless. This is a rule which admits of no exception. God calls a sinner his own, that is, justifies him, before he sanctifies. And by this very thing, the consciousness of his favour, he works in him that grateful, filial affection, from which springs every good temper, and word, and work.

13. And who are they that are thus called of God, but those whom he had before predestinated or decreed, to "conform to the image of his Son?" This decree (still speaking after the manner of men) precedes every man's calling: every believer was predestinated before he was called. For God calls none, but "according to the counsel of his will," according to this *προθεσις*, or plan of acting, which he had laid down before the foundation of the world.

14. Once more: as all that are called were predestinated, so all whom God has predestinated he foreknew. He knew, he saw them as believers, and as such predestinated them to salvation, according to his eternal decree, "He that believeth shall be saved." Thus we see the whole process of the work of God, from the end to the beginning. Who are glorified? None but those who were first sanctified. Who are sanctified? None but those who were first justified. Who are justified? None but those who were first predestinated. Who are predestinated? None but those whom God foreknew as believers. Thus the purpose and word of God stand unshaken as the pillars of heaven:—"He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." And thus God is clear from the blood of all men; since whoever perishes, perishes by his own act and deed. "They will not come unto me," says the Saviour of men; and "there is no salvation in any other." They "will not believe;" and there is no other way either to present or eternal salvation. Therefore, their blood is upon their own head; and God is still "justified in his saying" that he "willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of his truth."

15. The sum of all is this: The almighty, all.

wise God sees and knows, from everlasting to everlasting all that is, that was, and that is to come, through one eternal *now*. With him nothing is either past or future, but all things equally present. He has, therefore, if we speak according to the truth of things, no foreknowledge, no after-knowledge. This would be ill consistent with the apostle's words, "With him is no variableness or shadow of turning;" and with the account he gives of himself by the prophet, "I, the Lord, change not." Yet when he speaks to us, knowing whereof we are made, knowing the scantiness of our understanding, he lets himself down to our capacity, and speaks of himself after the manner of men. Thus, in condescension to our weakness, he speaks of his own purpose, counsel, plan, foreknowledge. Not that God has any need of counsel, of purpose, or of planning his work beforehand. Far be it from us to impute these to the Most High; to measure him by ourselves! It is merely in compassion to us that he speaks thus of himself, as foreknowing the things in heaven or earth, and as predestinating or fore-ordaining them. But can we possibly imagine that these expressions are to be taken literally? To one who was so gross in his conceptions might he not say, "Thinkest thou I am such an one as thyself?" Not so: as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than thy ways. I know, decree, work, in such a manner as it is not possible for thee to conceive: but to give thee some faint, glimmering knowledge of my ways, I use the language of men, and suit myself to thy apprehensions in this thy infant state of existence.

16. What is it, then, that we learn from this whole account? It is this, and no more:—(1.) God knows all believers; (2.) Wills that they should be saved from sin; (3.) To that end, justifies them, (4.) Sanctifies, and, (5.) Takes them to glory.

Oh that men would praise the Lord for this his goodness; and that they would be content with this plain account of it, and not endeavour to wade into those mysteries which are too deep for angels to fathom!

SERMON LIX.

GOD'S LOVE TO FALLEN MAN.

“Not as the offence, so also is the free gift.”—ROM. v. 15

1. How exceeding common, and how bitter, is the outcry against our first parent for the mischief which he not only brought upon himself, but entailed upon his latest posterity ! It was by his wilful rebellion against God that “sin entered into the world.” “By one man’s disobedience,” as the apostle observes, *the many*, *οι πολλοι*, as many as were then in the loins of their forefather, “were made,” or constituted, “sinners :” not only deprived of the favour of God, but also of his image, of all virtue, righteousness, and true holiness ; and sunk, partly into the image of the devil,—in pride, malice, and all other diabolical tempers ; partly into the image of the brute, being fallen under the dominion of brutal passions and grovelling appetites. Hence also death entered into the world, with all his forerunners and attendants,—pain, sickness, and a whole train of uneasy, as well as unholy, passions and tempers.

2. “For all this, we may thank Adam,” has echoed down from generation to generation. The selfsame charge has been repeated in every age and every nation, where the oracles of God are known ; in which alone this grand and important event has been discovered to the children of men. Has not *your* heart, and probably *your* lips too, joined in the general charge ? How few are there, of those who believe the scriptural relation of the fall of man, that have not entertained the same thought concerning our first parent ; severely condemn

ing him that, through wilful disobedience to the sole command of his Creator,

"Brought death into the world, and all our wo!"

3. Nay, it were well if the charge rested here: but it is certain it does not. It cannot be denied that it frequently glances from Adam to his Creator. Have not thousands, even of those that are called Christians, taken the liberty to call his merey, if not his justice also, into question, on this very account? Some, indeed, have done this a little more modestly, in an oblique and indireet manner; but others have thrown aside the mask, and asked, "Did not God foresee that Adam would abuse his liberty? And did he not know the baneful consequences which this must naturally have on all his posterity? And why, then, did he permit that disobedience? Was it not easy for the Almighty to have prevented it?"—He certainly did foresee the whole. This cannot be denied: for "known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world;" rather, from all eternity, as the words *ἀπ' αἰώνος* properly signify. And it was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it; for he hath all power both in heaven and earth. But it was known to him, at the same time, that it was best, upon the whole, not to prevent it. He knew that "not as the transgression, so is the free gift;" that the evil resulting from the former was not as the good resulting from the latter,—not worthy to be compared with it. He saw that to permit the fall of the first man was far best for mankind in general; that abundantly more good than evil would accrue to the posterity of Adam by his fall; that if "sin abounded" thereby over all the earth, yet grace would "much more abound;" yea, and that to every individual of the human race, unless it was his own choice.

4. It is exceeding strange that hardly any thing has been written, or at least published, on this subject; nay, that it has been so little weighed or understood by the generality of Christians; especially considering that it

is not a matter of mere curiosity, but a truth of the deepest importance; it being impossible on any other principle,

"To assert a gracious Providence,
And justify the ways of God with men;"

and considering withal how plain this important truth is to all sensible and candid inquirers. May the Lover of men open the eyes of our understanding, to perceive clearly that, by the fall of Adam, mankind in general have gained a capacity,

First, of being more holy and more happy on earth, and,

Secondly, of being more happy in heaven, than otherwise they could have been!

1. And, first, mankind in general have gained, by the fall of Adam, a capacity of attaining more holiness and happiness on earth than it would have been possible for them to attain if Adam had not fallen. For if Adam had not fallen, Christ had not died. Nothing can be more clear than this; nothing more undeniable: the more thoroughly we consider the point, the more deeply shall we be convinced of it. Unless all the partakers of human nature had received that deadly wound in Adam, it would not have been needful for the Son of God to take our nature upon him. Do you not see that this was the very ground of his coming into the world? "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and thus death passed upon all," through him in whom all men sinned. (Rom. v. 12.) Was it not to remedy this very thing that "the Word was made flesh," that "as in Adam all died, so in Christ all" might "be made alive?" Unless, then, many had been made sinners by the disobedience of one, by the obedience of one many would not have been made righteous: (verse 19 :) so there would have been no room for that amazing display of the Son of God's love to mankind; there would have been no occasion for his being "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It could not then have been said, to the astonishment of all the

hosts of heaven, "God so loved the world," yea, the ungodly world, which had no thought or desire of returning to him, "that he gave his Son" out of his bosom, his only-begotten Son, "to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Neither could we then have said, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself;" or that he "made him to be sin," that is, *i. sin-offering*, "for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God through him." There would have been no such occasion for such "an advocate with the Father," as "Jesus Christ the righteous;" neither for his appearing "at the right hand of God, to make intercession for us."

2. What is the necessary consequence of this? It is this: there could then have been no such thing as faith in God thus loving the world, giving his only Son for us men, and for our salvation. There could have been no such thing as faith in the Son of God, as "loving us and giving himself for us." There could have been no faith in the Spirit of God as renewing the image of God in our hearts, as raising us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. Indeed, the whole privilege of justification by faith could have had no existence; there could have been no redemption in the blood of Christ; neither could Christ have "been made of God unto us," either "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification," or "redemption."

3. And the same grand blank which was in our faith must likewise have been in our love. We might have loved the Author of our being, the Father of angels and men, as our Creator and Preserver: we might have said, "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" But we could not have loved him under the nearest and dearest relation,—as delivering up his Son for us all. We might have loved the Son of God, as being the "brightness of his Father's glory, the express image of his person;" (although this ground seems to belong rather to the inhabitants of heaven

than earth;) but we could not have loved him as "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," and, "by that one oblation of himself once offered, making a full sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." We could not have been "made conformable to his death," nor have known "the power of his resurrection." We could not have loved the Holy Ghost, as revealing to us the Father and the Son; as opening the eyes of our understanding; bringing us out of darkness into his marvellous light; renewing the image of God in our soul, and sealing us unto the day of redemption. So that, in truth, what is now, "in the sight of God, even the Father," not of fallible men, "pure religion and undefiled," would then have had no being; inasmuch as it wholly depends on those grand principles,—“By grace ye are saved through faith;” and, “Jesus Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

4. We see, then, what unspeakable advantage we derive from the fall of our first parent with regard to faith;—faith both in God the Father, who spared not his own Son, his only Son, but “wounded him for our transgressions,” and “bruised him for our iniquities;” and in God the Son, who poured out his soul for us transgressors, and washed us in his own blood. We see what advantage we derive therefrom with regard to the love of God; both of God the Father and God the Son. The chief ground of this love, as long as we remain in the body, is plainly declared by the apostle: “We love Him because He first loved us.” But the greatest instance of his love had never been given, if Adam had not fallen.

5. And as our faith, both in God the Father and the Son, receives an unspeakable increase, if not its very being, from this grand event, as does also our love both of the Father and the Son; so does the love of our neighbour also, our benevolence to all mankind, which cannot but increase in the same proportion with our faith and love of God. For who does not

apprehend the force of that inference drawn by the loving apostle: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." If God *SO* loved us;—observe, the stress of the argument lies on this very point: *SO loved us*, as to deliver up his only Son to die a cursed death for our salvation. Beloved, what manner of love is this wherewith God hath loved us; so as to give his *only Son*, in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal? What manner of love is this wherewith the only-begotten Son of God hath loved us, so as to *empty himself*, as far as possible, of his eternal Godhead; as to divest himself of that glory which he had with the Father before the world began; as to take upon him the form of a servant, being found in fashion as a man; and then to humble himself still further, "being obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!" If God *SO* loved us, how ought we to love one another! But this motive to brotherly love had been totally wanting if Adam had not fallen. Consequently, we could not then have loved one another in so high a degree as we may now. Nor could there have been that height and depth in the command of our blessed Lord, "As I have loved you, so love one another."

6. Such gainers may we be by Adam's fall, with regard both to the love of God and of our neighbour. But there is another grand point, which, though little adverted to, deserves our deepest consideration. By that one act of our first parent, not only "sin entered into the world," but pain also, and was alike entailed on his whole posterity. And herein appeared not only the justice but the unspeakable goodness of God. For how much good does he continually bring out of this evil! how much holiness and happiness out of pain!

7. How innumerable are the benefits which God conveys to the children of men through the channel of sufferings!—so that it might well be said, "What are termed afflictions in the language of men, are in the language of God styled blessings." Indeed had there been no suffering in the wor'd, a considerable part of

religion, yea, and in some respects, the most excellent part, could have had no place therein; since the very existence of it depends on our suffering; so that had there been no pain, it could have had no being. Upon this foundation, even our suffering, it is evident all our passive graces are built; yea, the noblest of all Christian graces,—*love enduring all things*. Here is the ground for resignation to God, enabling us to say from the heart, in every trying hour, “It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good:” “Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?” And what a glorious spectacle is this! Did it not constrain even a heathen to cry out, “*Ecce spectaculum Deo dignum!*” “See a sight worthy of God;” a good man struggling with adversity, and superior to it. Here is the ground for confidence in God, both with regard to what we feel, and with regard to what we should fear, were it not that our soul is calmly stayed on Him. What room could there be for trust in God, if there was no such thing as pain or danger? Who might not say then, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” It is by sufferings that our faith is tried, and, therefore, made more acceptable to God. It is in the day of trouble that we have occasion to say, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” And this is well pleasing to God, that we should own him in the face of danger; in defiance of sorrow, sickness, pain or death.

8. Again: had there been neither natural nor moral evil in the world, what must have become of patience, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering? It is manifest they could have had no being; seeing all these have evil for their object. If, therefore, evil had never entered into the world, neither could these have had any place in it. For who could have returned good for evil, had there been no evil-doer in the universe? How had it been possible, on that supposition, to “overcome evil with good?” Will you say, “But all these graces might have been divinely infused into the hearts of

men?" Undoubtedly they might: but if they had, there would have been no use or exercise for them. Whereas in the present state of things we can never long want occasion to exercise them: and the more they are exercised, the more all our graces are strengthened and increased. And in the same proportion as our resignation, our confidence in God, our patience and fortitude, our meekness, gentleness, and longsuffering, together with our faith, and love of God and man, increase, must our happiness increase, even in the present world.

9. Yet again: as God's permission of Adam's fall gave all his posterity a thousand opportunities of suffering, and thereby of exercising all those passive graces which increase both their holiness and happiness; so it gives them opportunities of doing good in numberless instances; of exercising themselves in various good works, which otherwise could have had no being. And what exertions of benevolence, of compassion, of godlike mercy, had then been totally prevented! Who could then have said to the Lover of men,—

"Thy mind throughout my life be shown,
While listening to the wretch's cry,
The widow's or the orphan's groan,
On mercy's wings I swiftly fly,
The poor and needy to relieve;
Myself, my all for them to give?"

It is the just observation of a benevolent man,—

"All worldly joys are less
Than that one joy of doing kindnesses."

Surely in "keeping this commandment," if no other, "there is great reward." "As we have time, let us do good unto all men;" good of every kind, and in every degree. Accordingly, the more good we do, (other circumstances being equal,) the happier we shall be. The more we deal our bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with garments,—the more we relieve the stranger, and visit them that are sick or in prison,—the more kind offices we do to those that groan under the various evils

of human life,—the more comfort we receive even in the present world, the greater the recompense we have in our own bosom.

10. To sum up what has been said under this head ; As the more holy we are upon earth the more happy we must be ; (seeing there is an inseparable connection between holiness and happiness ;) as the more good we do to others, the more of present reward redounds into our own bosom ; even as our sufferings for God lead us to rejoice in him “with joy unspeakable and full of glory ;” therefore, the fall of Adam,—first, by giving us an opportunity of being far more holy, secondly, by giving us the occasion of doing innumerable good works, which otherwise could not have been done, and, thirdly, by putting it into our power to suffer for God, whereby “the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us,”—may be of such advantage to the children of men, even in the present life, as they will not thoroughly comprehend till they attain life everlasting.

11. It is then we shall be enabled fully to comprehend, not only the advantages which accrue at the present time to the sons of men by the fall of their first parent, but the infinitely greater advantages which they may reap from it in eternity. In order to form some conception of this, we may remember the observation of the apostle : As “one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead.” The most glorious stars will undoubtedly be those who are the most holy, who bear most of that image of God wherein they were created ; the next in glory to these will be those who have been most abundant in good works ; and, next to them, those that have suffered most, according to the will of God. But what advantages, in every one of these respects, will the children of God receive in heaven, by God's permitting the introduction of pain upon earth, in consequence of sin ! By occasion of this they attained many holy tempers which otherwise could have had no being ;—resignation to God ; confidence in him, in times of

trouble and danger; patience, meekness, gentleness, longsuffering, and the whole train of passive virtues; and on account of this superior holiness, they will then enjoy superior happiness. Again: every one will then "receive his own reward, according to his own labour:" every individual will be rewarded "according to his work." But the fall gave rise to innumerable good works, which could otherwise never have existed; such as ministering to the necessities of saints; yea, relieving the distressed in every kind; and hereby innumerable stars will be added to their eternal crown. Yet again: there will be an abundant reward in heaven for *suffering* as well as for *doing* the will of God: "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Therefore that event which occasioned the entrance of suffering into the world, has thereby occasioned to all the children of God an increase of glory to all eternity. For although the sufferings themselves will be at an end; although

"The pain of life shall then be o'er,
The anguish and distracting care;
There sighing grief shall weep no more;
And sin shall never enter there;"—

yct the joys occasioned thereby shall never end, but flow at God's right hand for evermore.

12. There is one advantage more that we reap from Adam's fall, which is not unworthy our attention. Unless in Adam all had died, being in the loins of their first parent, every descendant of Adam, every child of man, must have personally answered for himself to God. It seems to be a necessary consequence of this, that if he had once fallen, once violated any command of God, there would have been no possibility of his rising again; there was no help, but he must have perished without remedy. For that covenant knew not to show mercy: the word was, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Now, who would not rather be on the footing he is now, —under a covenant of mercy? Who would wish to

hazard a whole eternity upon one stake? Is it not infinitely more desirable to be in a state wherein, though encompassed with infirmities, yet we do not run such a desperate risk, but if we fall, we may rise again?—wherein we may say,

“My trespass is grown up to heaven;
But far above the skies,
In Christ abundantly forgiven,
I see thy mercies risc!”

13. *In Christ!* Let me entreat every serious person once more to fix his attention here. All that has been said, all that can be said, on these subjects, centres in this point: the fall of Adam produced the death of Christ. Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! Yea,

“Let earth and heaven agree,
Angels and men be join’d,
To celebrate with me
The Saviour of mankind;
T’adore the all-atoning Lamb,
And bless the sound of Jesu’s name!”

If God had prevented the fall of man, the “Word” had never been “made flesh;” nor had we ever “seen his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.” Those mysteries never had been displayed “which the” very “angels desire to look into.” Methinks this consideration swallows up all the rest, and should never be out of our thoughts. Unless “by one man judgment had come upon all men to condemnation,” neither angels nor men could ever have known “the unsearchable riches of Christ.”

14. See, then, upon the whole, how little reason we have to repine at the fall of our first parent; since herefrom we may derive such unspeakable advantages, both in time and eternity. See how small pretence there is for questioning the merey of God, in permitting that event to take place; since therein merey, by infinite degrees, rejoices over judgment. Where then is the man that presumes to blame God for not preventing

Adam's sin? Should we not rather bless him from the ground of the heart, for therein laying the grand scheme of man's redemption, and making way for that glorious manifestation of his wisdom, holiness, justice, and mercy? If, indeed, God had decreed, before the foundation of the world, that millions of men should dwell in everlasting burnings, because Adam sinned hundreds or thousands of years before they had a being, I know not who could thank him for this, unless the devil and his angels: seeing, on this supposition, all those millions of unhappy spirits would be plunged into hell by Adam's sin, without any possible advantage from it. But, blessed be God, this is not the case. Such a decree never existed. On the contrary, every one born of a woman may be an unspeakable gainer thereby: and none ever was or can be a loser but by his own choice.

15. We see here a full answer to that plausible account of the origin of evil, published to the world some years since, and supposed to be unanswerable: that "it necessarily resulted from the nature of matter, which God was not able to alter." It is very kind in this sweet-tongued orator to make an excuse for God! But there is really no occasion for it: God hath answered for himself. He made man in his own image; a spirit endowed with understanding and liberty. Man, abusing that liberty, produced evil; brought sin and pain into the world. This God permitted, in order to a fuller manifestation of his wisdom, justice, and mercy, by bestowing on all who would receive it an infinitely greater happiness than they could possibly have attained if Adam had not fallen.

16. "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Although a thousand particulars of "his judgments and of his ways are unsearchable" to us, and past our finding out; yet may we discern the general scheme running through time into eternity "According to the counsel of his own will," the plan he had laid before the foundation of

the world, he created the parent of all mankind in his own image; and he permitted all men to be made sinners, by the disobedience of this one man, that, by the obedience of one, all who receive the free gift may be infinitely holier and happier to all eternity!

HYMN.

JESUS, thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Mid flaming words, in these array'd,
With joy shall I lift up my head.

Bold shall I stand in thy great day,
For who aught to my charge shall lay?
Fully absolved through these I am,
From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

The holy, meek, unspotted Lamb,
Who from the Father's bosom came,
Who died for me, even me, t' atone,
Now for my Lord and God I own.

Lord, I believe thy precious blood,
Which, at the mercy-seat of God,
For ever doth for sinners plead,
For me, even for my soul, was shed.

Lord, I believe were sinners more
Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid,
For all a full atonement made.

When from the dust of death I rise,
To claim my mansion in the skies,
Even then,—this shall be all my plea,
Jesus hath lived, hath died for me.

Thus *Abraham*, the Friend of God,
Thus all heaven's armies bought with blood,
Saviour of sinners Thee proclaim;
Sinners, of whom the chief I am.

Jesus, be endless praise to thee,
Whose boundless mercy hath for me,
For me, and all thy hands have made,
An everlasting ransom paid.

Ah! give to all thy servants, Lord,
With power to speak thy gracious word;
That all, who to thy wounds will flee,
May find eternal life in thee.

Thou God of power, thou God of love,
Let the whole world thy mercy prove!
Now let thy word o'er all prevail;
Now take the spoils of death and **hell**.

SERMON LX.

THE GENERAL DELIVERANCE.

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- "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.*
"For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that subjected it.
"Yet in hope that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God.
"For we know that the whole creation groaneth, and travaileth in pain together until now."—Rom. viii. 19–22.
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1. NOTHING is more sure, than that, as "the Lord is loving to every man," so "his mercy is over all his works;" all that have sense, all that are capable of pleasure or pain, of happiness or misery. In consequence of this, "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness. He prepareth food for cattle," as well as "herbs for the children of men." He provideth for the fowls of the air, "feeding the young ravens when they cry unto him." "He sendeth the springs into the rivers, that run among the hills, to give drink to every beast of the field," and that even "the wild asses may quench their thirst." And, suitably to this, he directs us to be tender of even the meaner creatures; to show mercy to these also. "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn:"—a custom which is observed in the eastern countries even to this day. And this is by no means contradicted by St. Paul's question: "Doth God take care for oxen?" Without doubt he does. We cannot deny it, without flatly contradicting his word. The plain meaning of the apostle is, Is this all that is implied in the text? Hath

it not a further meaning? Does it not teach us, we are to feed the bodies of those whom we desire to feed our souls? Meantime it is certain, God "giveth grass for the cattle," as well as "herbs for the use of men."

2. But how are these scriptures reconcilable to the present state of things? How are they consistent with what we daily see round about us, in every part of the creation! If the Creator and Father of every living thing is rich in mercy towards all; if he does not overlook or despise any of the works of his own hands; if he wills even the meanest of them to be happy according to their degree; how comes it to pass, that such a complication of evils oppresses, yea, overwhelms them? How is it that misery of all kinds overspreads the face of the earth? This is a question which has puzzled the wisest philosophers in all ages; and it cannot be answered, without having recourse to the oracles of God. But, taking these for our guide, we may inquire,

I. What was the original state of the brute creation?

II. In what state is it at present? And,

III. In what state will it be at the manifestation of the children of God?

I. 1. We may inquire, in the first place, What was the original state of the brute creation? And may we not learn this, even from the place which was assigned them; namely, the garden of God? All the beasts of the field, and all the fowls of the air, were with Adam in paradise. And there is no question but their state was suited to their place: it was paradisaical; perfectly happy. Undoubtedly it bore a near resemblance to the state of man himself. By taking, therefore, a short view of the one, we may conceive the other. Now, "man was made in the image of God." But "God is a Spirit:" so therefore was man;—only that spirit, being designed to dwell on earth, was lodged in an earthly tabernacle. As such, he had an innate principle of self-motion. And so, it seems, has every spirit in the universe; this being the proper distinguishing dif-

ference between spirit and matter, which is totally, essentially passive and inactive, as appears from a thousand experiments. He was, after the likeness of his Creator, endued with understanding; a capacity of apprehending whatever objects were brought before it, and of judging concerning them. He was endued with a will, exerting itself in various affections and passions: and, lastly, with liberty, or freedom of choice; without which all the rest would have been in vain, and he would have been no more capable of serving his Creator than a piece of earth or marble; he would have been as incapable of vice or virtue, as any part of the inanimate creation. In these, in the power of self-motion, understanding, will, and liberty, the natural image of God consisted.

2. How far his power of self-motion then extended, it is impossible for us to determine. It is probable, that he had a far higher degree both of swiftness and strength, than any of his posterity ever had, and much less any of the lower creatures. It is certain, he had such strength of understanding as no man ever since had. His understanding was perfect in its kind; capable of apprehending all things clearly, and judging concerning them according to truth, without any mixture of error. His will had no wrong bias of any sort; but all his passions and affections were regular, being steadily and uniformly guided by the dictates of his unerring understanding; embracing nothing but good, and every good in proportion to its degree of intrinsic goodness. His liberty likewise was wholly guided by his understanding: he chose, or refused, according to its direction. Above all, (which was his highest excellence, far more valuable than all the rest put together,) he was a creature capable of God; capable of knowing, loving, and obeying his Creator. And, in fact, he did know God, did unfeignedly love and uniformly obey him. This was the supreme perfection of man; (as it is of all intelligent beings;) the continually seeing, and loving, and obeying the Father of the spirits of all flesh. From

this right state and right use of all his faculties, his happiness naturally flowed. In this the essence of his happiness consisted. But it was increased by all the things that were round about him. He saw, with unspeakable pleasure, the order, the beauty, the harmony, of all the creatures; of all animated, all inanimate nature; the serenity of the skies; the sun walking in brightness; the sweetly variegated clothing of the earth; the trees, the fruits, the flowers,

“And liquid lapse of murmuring streams.”

Nor was this pleasure interrupted by evil of any kind. It had no alloy of sorrow or pain, whether of body or mind. For while he was innocent he was impassive; incapable of suffering. Nothing could stain his purity of joy. And, to crown all, he was immortal.

3. To this creature, endued with all these excellent faculties, thus qualified for his high charge, God said, “Have thou dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Gen. i. 28.) And so the Psalmist: “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.” (Psalm viii. 6, &c.) So that man was God’s vicegerent upon earth, the prince and governor of this lower world; and all the blessings of God flowed through him to the inferior creatures. Man was the channel of conveyance between his Creator and the whole brute creation.

4. But what blessings were those that were then conveyed through man to the lower creatures? What was the original state of the brute creatures, when they were first created? This deserves a more attentive consideration than has been usually given it. It is certain these, as well as man, had an innate principle of self-motion; and that, at least, in as high a degree as

they enjoy it at this day. Again: they were endued with a degree of understanding; not less than that they are possessed of now. They had also a will, including various passions; which, likewise, they still enjoy. And they had liberty; a power of choice; a degree of which is still found in every living creature. Nor can we doubt but their understanding too was, in the beginning, perfect in its kind. Their passions and affections were regular, and their choice always guided by their understanding.

5: What then is the barrier between men and brutes? the line which they cannot pass? It was not reason. Set aside that ambiguous term: exchange it for the plain word, understanding: and who can deny that brutes have this? We may as well deny that they have sight or hearing. But it is this: man is capable of God; the inferior creatures are not. We have no ground to believe that they are, in any degree, capable of knowing, loving, or obeying God. This is the specific difference between man and brute; the great gulf which they cannot pass over. And as a loving obedience to God was the perfection of man, so a loving obedience to man was the perfection of brutes. And as long as they continued in this, they were happy after their kind; happy in the right state and the right use of their respective faculties. Yea, and so long they had some shadowy resemblance of even moral goodness. For they had gratitude to man for benefits received, and a reverence for him. They had likewise a kind of benevolence to each other, unmixed with any contrary temper. How beautiful many of them were, we may conjecture from that which still remains; and that not only in the noblest creatures, but in those of the lowest order. And they were all surrounded, not only with plenteous food, but with every thing that could give them pleasure; pleasure unmixed with pain: for pain was not yet; it had not entered into paradise. And they too were immortal: for "God made not death. neither hath he pleasure in the death of any living."

6. How true then is that word, "God saw every thing

that he had made: and, behold, it was very good!" But how far is this from being the present case! In what a condition is the whole lower world!—to say nothing of inanimate nature, wherein all the elements seem to be out of course, and by turns to fight against man. Since man rebelled against his Maker, in what a state is all animated nature! Well might the apostle say of this, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now." This directly refers to the brute creation. In what state this is at present we are now to consider.

II. 1. As all the blessings of God in paradise flowed through man to the inferior creatures; as man was the great channel of communication between the Creator and the whole brute creation; so when man made himself incapable of transmitting those blessings, that communication was necessarily cut off. The intercourse between God and the inferior creatures being stopped, those blessings could no longer flow in upon them. And then it was that "the creature," every creature, "was subjected to vanity," to sorrow, to pain of every kind, to all manner of evils: not, indeed, "willingly," not by its own choice, not by any act or deed of its own; "but by reason of Him that subjected it," by the wise permission of God, determining to draw eternal good out of this temporary evil.

2. But in what respect was "the creature," every creature, then "made subject to vanity?" What did the meaner creatures suffer, when man rebelled against God? It is probable they sustained much loss, even in the lower faculties; their vigour, strength, and swiftness. But undoubtedly they suffered far more in their understanding; more than we can easily conceive. Perhaps insects and worms had then as much understanding as the most intelligent brutes have now: whereas millions of creatures have, at present, little more understanding than the earth on which they crawl, or the rock to which they adhere. They suffered still more in their will, in **their passions** which were then variously distorted and

frequently set in flat opposition to the little understanding that was left them. Their liberty, likewise, was greatly impaired; yea, in many cases, totally destroyed. They are still utterly enslaved to irrational appetites, which have the full dominion over them. The very foundations of their nature are out of course; are turned upside down. As man is deprived of *his* perfection, his loving obedience to God; so brutes are deprived of *their* perfection, their loving obedience to man. The far greater part of them flee from him; studiously avoid his hated presence. The most of the rest set him at open defiance; yea, destroy him, if it be in their power. A few only, those we commonly term "domestic animals," retain more or less of their original disposition, (through the mercy of God,) love him still and pay obedience to him.

3. Setting these few aside, how little shadow of good, of gratitude, of benevolence, of any right temper, is now to be found in any part of the brute creation! On the contrary, what savage fierceness, what unrelenting cruelty, are invariably observed in thousands of creatures; yea, is inseparable from their natures! Is it only the lion, the tiger, the wolf, among the inhabitants of the forests and plains,—the shark, and a few more voracious monsters, among the inhabitants of the waters,—or the eagle, among birds,—that tears the flesh, sucks the blood, and crushes the bones of their helpless fellow-creatures? Nay, the harmless fly, the laborious ant, the painted butterfly, are treated in the same merciless manner, even by the innocent songsters of the grove! The innumerable tribes of poor insects are continually devoured by them. And whereas there is but a small number, comparatively, of beasts of prey on the earth, it is quite otherwise in the liquid element. There are but few inhabitants of the waters, whether of the sea, or of the rivers, which do not devour whatsoever they can master. Yea, they exceed herein all the beasts of the forest, and all the birds of prey. For none of these have been ever observed to prey upon their own species:—

Sævis inter se convenit ursis :

“Even savage bears will not each other tear.”

But the water-savages swallow up all, even of their own kind, that are smaller and weaker than themselves. Yea, such at present is the miserable constitution of the world, to such vanity is it now subjected, that an immense majority of creatures, perhaps a million to one, can no otherwise preserve their own lives, than by destroying their fellow-creatures!

4. And is not the very form, the outward appearance, of many of the creatures, as horrid as their dispositions? Where is the beauty which was stamped upon them when they came first out of the hands of their Creator? There is not the least trace of it left: so far from it, that they are shocking to behold! Nay, they are not only terrible and grisly to look upon, but deformed, and that to a high degree. Yet their features, ugly as they are at best, are frequently made more deformed than usual, when they are distorted by pain; which they cannot avoid, any more than the wretched sons of men. Pain of various kinds, weakness, sickness, diseases innumerable, come upon them; perhaps from within; perhaps from one another; perhaps from the inclemency of seasons; from fire, hail, snow, or storm; or from a thousand causes which they cannot foresee or prevent.

5. Thus, “as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; even so death passed upon all men;” and not on man only, but on those creatures also that “did not sin after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” And not death alone came upon them, but all its train of preparatory evils; pain, and ten thousand sufferings. Nor these only, but likewise all those irregular passions, all those unlovely tempers, (which in men are sins, and even in brutes are sources of misery,) “passed upon all” the inhabitants of the earth; and remain in all, except the children of God.

6. During this season of vanity, not only the feeblere creatures are continually destroyed by the stronger

not only the strong are frequently destroyed by those that are of equal strength; but both the one and the other are exposed to the violence and cruelty of him that is now their common enemy,—man. And if his swiftness or strength is not equal to theirs, yet his art more than supplies that defect. By this he eludes all their force, how great soever it be; by this he defeats all their swiftness: and, notwithstanding their various shifts and contrivances, discovers all their retreats. He pursues them over the widest plains, and through the thickest forests. He overtakes them in the fields of air, he finds them out in the depths of the sea. Nor are the mild and friendly creatures who still own his sway, and are dutious to his commands, secured thereby from more than brutal violence; from outrage and abuse of various kinds. Is the generous horse, that serves his master's necessity or pleasure with unwearied diligence,—is the faithful dog, that waits the motion of his hand, or his eye, exempt from this? What returns for their long and faithful service do many of these poor creatures find? And what a dreadful difference is there, between what they suffer from their fellow-brutes, and what they suffer from the tyrant man! The lion, the tiger, or the shark, gives them pain from mere necessity, in order to prolong their own life; and puts them out of their pain at once: but the human shark, without any such necessity, torments them of his free choice; and perhaps continues their lingering pain till, after months or years, death signs their release.

III. 1. But will “the creature,” will even the brute creation, always remain in this deplorable condition? God forbid that we should affirm this; yea, or even entertain such a thought! While “the whole creation groaneth together,” (whether men attend or not,) their groans are not dispersed in idle air, but enter into the ears of Him that made them. While his creatures “travail together in pain,” he knoweth all their pain, and is bringing them nearer and nearer to the birth, which shall be accomplished in its season. He seeth

"the earnest expectation" wherewith the whole animated creation "waiteth for" that final "manifestation of the sons of God;" in which "they themselves also shall be delivered" (not by annihilation; annihilation is not deliverance) "from the" present "bondage of corruption, into" a measure of "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

2. Nothing can be more express: away with vulgar prejudices, and let the plain word of God take place. They "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into glorious liberty,"—even a measure, according as they are capable, of "the liberty of the children of God."

A general view of this is given us in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation. When He that "sitteth on the great white throne" hath pronounced, "Behold, I make all things new;" when the word is fulfilled, "The tabernacle of God is with men, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God;"—then the following blessing shall take place (not only on the children of men; there is no such restriction in the text; but) on every creature according to its capacity: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying. Neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

3. To descend to a few particulars: the whole brute creation will then, undoubtedly, be restored, not only to the vigour, strength, and swiftness which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed. They will be restored, not only to that measure of understanding which they had in paradise, but to a degree of it as much higher than that, as the understanding of an elephant is beyond that of a worm. And whatever affections they had in the garden of God, will be restored with vast increase; being exalted and refined in a manner which we ourselves are not now able to comprehend. The liberty they then had will be completely restored, and they will be free in all their motions. They will be delivered from al

irregular appetites, from all unruly passions, from every disposition that is either evil in itself, or has any tendency to evil. No rage will be found in any creature, no fierceness, no cruelty, or thirst for blood. So far from it, that "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed together; and the lion shall cat straw like the ox. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (Isa. xi. 6, &c.)

4. Thus, in that day, all the vanity to which they are now helplessly subject will be abolished; they will suffer no more, either from within or without; the days of their groaning are ended. At the same time, there can be no reasonable doubt, but all the horridness of their appearance, and all the deformity of their aspect, will vanish away, and be exchanged for their primeval beauty. And with their beauty their happiness will return; to which there can then be no obstruction. As there will be nothing within, so there will be nothing without to give them any uneasiness: no heat or cold, no storm or tempest, but one perennial spring. In the new earth, as well as the new heavens, there will be nothing to give pain, but every thing that the wisdom and goodness of God can create to give happiness. As a recompense for what they once suffered, while under the "bondage of corruption," when God has "renewed the face of the earth," and their corruptible body has put on incorruption, they shall enjoy happiness suited to their state, without alloy, without interruption, and without end.

5. But though I doubt not that the Father of all has a tender regard for even his lowest creatures, and that, in consequence of this, he will make them large amends for all they suffer while under their present bondage; yet I dare not affirm that he has an *equal regard* for them and for the children of men. I do not believe that

"He sees *with equal eyes*, as Lord of all
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall."

By no means. This is exceedingly pretty ; but it is absolutely false. For though

“Mercy, with truth and endless grace,
O’er all his works doth reign,
Yet chiefly he delights to bless
His favourite creature, man.”

God regards his meanest creatures much ; but he regards man much more. He does not *equally* regard a herc and a sparrow ; the best of men and the lowest of brutes. “How *much more* does your heavenly Father care for you !” says He “who is in the bosom of his Father.” Those who thus strain the point are clearly confuted by his question, “Are not ye *much better* than they ?” Let it suffice, that God regards every thing that he hath made, in its own order, and in proportion to that measure of his own image which he has stamped upon it.

6. May I be permitted to mention here a conjecture concerning the brute creation ? What, if it should then please the all-wise, the all-gracious Creator, to raise them higher in the scale of beings ? What, if it should please him, when he makes us “equal to angels,” to make them what we are now,—creatures capable of God ; capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying the Author of their being ? If it should be so, ought our eye to be evil because he is good ? However this be, he will certainly do what will be most for his own glory.

7 If it be objected to all this, (as very probably it will,) “but of what use will those creatures be in that future state ?” I answer this by another question, What use are they now ? If there be (as has commonly been supposed) eight thousand species of insects, who is able to inform us of what use seven thousand of them are ? If there are four thousand species of fishes, who can tell us of what use are more than three thousand of them ? If there are six hundred sorts of birds, who can tell of what use five hundred of those species are ? If there be four hundred sorts of beasts, to what use do three hundred of them serve ? Consider this ; consider how little we know of even the present designs of

God; and then you will not wonder that we know still less of what he designs to do in the new heavens and the new earth.

8. "But what end does it answer to dwell upon this subject, which we so imperfectly understand?" To consider so much as we do understand, so much as God has been pleased to reveal to us, may answer that excellent end,—to illustrate that mercy of God which "is over all his works." And it may exceedingly confirm our belief that, much more, he "is loving to every man." For how well may we urge our Lord's words, "Are not ye much better than they?" If, then, the Lord takes such care of the fowls of the air, and of the beasts of the field, shall he not much more take care of *you*, creatures of a nobler order? If "the Lord will save," as the inspired writer affirms, "both man and beast," in their several degrees, surely "the children of men may put their trust under the shadow of his wings!"

9. May it not answer another end; namely, furnish us with a full answer to a plausible objection against the justice of God, in suffering numberless creatures that never had sinned to be so severely punished? They could not sin; for they were not moral agents. Yet how severely do they suffer!—yea, many of them, beasts of burden in particular, almost the whole time of their abode on earth; so that they can have no retribution here below. But the objection vanishes away, if we consider that something better remains after death for these poor creatures also; that these, likewise, shall one day be delivered from this bondage of corruption, and shall then receive an ample amends for all their present sufferings.

10. One more excellent end may undoubtedly be answered by the preceding considerations. They may encourage us to imitate Him whose mercy is over all his works. They may soften our hearts towards the meaner creatures, knowing that the Lord careth for them. It may enlarge our heart towards those poor creatures, to reflect that, as vile as they appear in our eyes, not one

of them is forgotten in the sight of our Father which is in heaven. Through all the vanity to which they are now subjected, let us look to what God hath prepared for them. Yea, let us habituate ourselves to look forward, beyond this present scene of bondage, to the happy time when they will be delivered therefrom into the liberty of the children of God.

11. From what has been said, I cannot but draw one inference, which no man of reason can deny. If it is this which distinguishes men from beasts,—that they are creatures capable of God, capable of knowing and loving and enjoying him; then whoever is “without God in the world,” whoever does not know or love or enjoy God, and is not careful about the matter, does, in effect, disclaim the nature of man, and degrade himself into a beast! Let such vouchsafe a little attention to those remarkable words of Solomon: “I said in my heart concerning the estate of the sons of men,—They might see that they themselves are beasts.” (Eccles. iii. 18.) These sons of men are undoubtedly beasts; and that by their own act and deed; for they deliberately and wilfully disclaim the sole characteristic of human nature. It is true, they may have a share of reason; they have speech, and they walk erect; but they have not the mark, the only mark, which totally separates man from the brute creation. “That which befalleth beasts, the same thing befalleth them.” They are equally without God in the world; “so that a man” of this kind “hath no pre-eminence above a beast.”

12. So much more let all those who are of a nobler turn of mind assert the distinguishing dignity of their nature. Let all who are of a more generous spirit know and maintain their rank in the scale of beings. Rest not till you enjoy the privilege of humanity,—the knowledge and love of God. Lift up your heads, ye creatures capable of God! Lift up your hearts to the Source of your being!

“Know God, and teach your souls to know
The joys that from religion flow.”

Give your hearts to Him who, together with ten thousand blessings, has given you his Son, his only Son! Let your continual "fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ!" Let God be in all your thoughts, and ye will be men indeed. Let Him be your God and your All,—the desire of your eyes, the joy of your heart, and your portion for ever.

SERMON LXI.

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

"The mystery of iniquity doth already work."—2 THESS. ii. 7.

1. WITHOUT inquiring how far these words refer to any particular event in the Christian church, I would at present take occasion from them to consider that important question,—In what manner the mystery of iniquity hath wrought among us till it hath wellnigh covered the whole earth.

2. It is certain that "God made man upright;" perfectly holy and perfectly happy. But, by rebelling against God, he destroyed himself, lost the favour and the image of God, and entailed sin, with its attendant, pain, on himself and all his posterity. Yet his merciful Creator did not leave him in this helpless, hopeless state: he immediately appointed his Son, his well-beloved Son, "who is the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person," to be the Saviour of men; "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" the great Physician who, by his almighty Spirit, should heal the sickness of their souls, and restore them not only to the favour, but to the "image of God wherein they were created."

3. This great mystery of godliness began to work from the very time of the original promise. Accordingly, the Lamb being, in the purpose of God, "slain from the beginning of the world," from the same period his sanctifying Spirit began to renew the souls of men. We have an undeniable instance of this in Abel, who "obtained a testimony" from God "that he was righteous." (Heb. xi. 4.) And from that very time all that

were partakers of the same faith were partakers of the same salvation ; were not only reinstated in the favour, but likewise restored to the image, of God.

4. But how exceeding small was the number of these, even from the earliest ages ! No sooner did "the sons of men multiply upon the face of the earth," than God, looking down from heaven, "saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth ;" so great that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil," only evil, and that "continually." (Gen. vi. 1-5.) And so it remained without any intermission, till God executed that terrible sentence, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth." (Verse 7.)

5. Only "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord ;" being "a just man, and perfect in his generations." "Him, therefore, with his wife, his sons, and their wives, God preserved from the general destruction." And one might have imagined that this small remnant would likewise have been "perfect in their generations." But how far was this from being the case ! Presently, after this signal deliverance, we find one of them, Ham, involved in sin, and under his father's curse. And how did "the mystery of iniquity" afterwards work, not only in the posterity of Ham, but in the posterity of Japheth ; yea, and of Shem,—Abraham and his family only excepted !

6. Yea, how did it work even in the posterity of Abraham ; in God's chosen people ! Were not these also, down to Moses, to David, to Malachi, to Herod the Great, a faithless and stubborn generation, a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity," continually forsaking the Lord, and "provoking the Holy One of Israel ?" And yet we have no reason to believe that these were worse than the nations that surrounded them, who were universally swallowed up in all manner of wickedness, as well as in damnable idolatries ; not having the God of heaven "in all their thoughts," but working all uncleanness with greediness.

7 In the fulness of time, when iniquity of every kind,

when ungodliness and unrighteousness, had spread over all nations, and covered the earth as a flood, it pleased God to lift up a standard against it by "bringing his first-begotten into the world." Now, then, one would expect "the mystery of godliness" would totally prevail over "the mystery of iniquity;" that the Son of God would be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as "salvation to his people Israel." All Israel, one would think, yea, and all the earth, will soon be filled with the glory of the Lord. Nay; "the mystery of iniquity" prevailed still, wellnigh over the face of the earth. How exceeding small was the number of those whose souls were healed by the Son of God himself! "When Peter stood up in the midst of them, the number of names were about a hundred and twenty." (Acts i. 15.) And even these were but imperfectly healed; the chief of them being a little before so weak in faith, that, though they did not, like Peter, forswear their Master, yet "they all forsook him and fled:" a plain proof that the sanctifying "Spirit was not" then "given, because Jesus was not glorified."

8. It was then, when he had "ascended up on high, and led captivity captive," that "the promise of the Father" was fulfilled, which they had heard from him. It was then he began to work like himself, showing that "all power was given to him in heaven and earth." "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and there appeared tongues as of fire; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts ii. 1, &c.) In consequence of this, three thousand souls received medicine to heal their sickness, were restored to the favour and the image of God, under one sermon of St. Peter's. (ii. 41.) "And the Lord added to them daily," not *such as should be saved*; a manifest perversion of the text; but, "such as were saved." The expression is peculiar; and so indeed is the position of the words, which run thus: "And the Lord added those that were saved daily to the church." First, they "were saved"

from the power of sin ; then they "were added" to the assembly of the faithful.

9. In order clearly to see how they were already saved, we need only observe the short account of them which is recorded in the latter part of the second and in the fourth chapter. "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers:" that is, they were daily taught by the apostles, and had all things common, and daily received the Lord's supper, and attended all the public service. (ii. 42.) "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." (ii. 44, 45.) And again: "The multitude of them that believed," now greatly increased, "were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common." (iv. 32.) And yet again: "Great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need." (Verses 33-35.)

10. But here a question will naturally occur: "How came they to act thus, to have all things in common, seeing we do not read of any positive command to do this?" I answer, There needed no outward command: the command was written on their hearts. It naturally and necessarily resulted from the degree of love which they enjoyed. Observe! "They were of one heart and of one soul:" and not so much as one (so the words run) said, (they could not, while their hearts so overflowed with love,) "that any of the things which he possessed was his own." And wheresoever the same cause shall prevail, the same effect will naturally follow.

11. Here was the dawn of the proper gospel day

Here was a proper Christian church. It was now "the Sun of Righteousness" rose upon the earth, "with healing in his wings." He did now "save his people from their sins;" he "healed all their sickness." He not only taught that religion which is the true "healing of the soul," but effectually planted it in the earth; filling the souls of all that believed in him with *righteousness*,—gratitude to God, and good-will to man; attended with a *peace* that surpassed all understanding, and with *joy* unspeakable and full of glory.

12. But how soon did "the mystery of iniquity" work again, and obscure the glorious prospect! It began to work (not openly, indeed, but covertly) in two of the Christians, Ananias and Sapphira. "They sold their possession," like the rest, and probably from the same motive; but, afterwards, giving place to the devil, and reasoning with flesh and blood, they "kept back part of the price." See the first Christians, that "made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience;" the first that "drew back to perdition;" instead of continuing to "believe to the" final "salvation of the soul!" Mark the first plague which infected the Christian church; namely, the love of money! And will it not be the grand plague in all generations, whenever God shall revive the same work? O ye believers in Christ, take warning! Whether you are yet but little children, or young men that are strong in the faith, see the snare; your snare in particular,—that which you will be peculiarly exposed to after you have escaped from gross pollutions. "Love not the world, neither the things of the world! If any man love the world," whatever he was in times past, "the love of the Father is not" now "in him!"

13. However, this plague was stayed in the first Christian church, by instantly cutting off the infected persons. By that signal judgment of God on the first offenders, "great fear came upon all;" (Acts v. 11;) so that, for the present at least, not one dared to follow their example. Meantime, believers, men full of faith

and love, who rejoiced to have all things in common, "were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." (Verse 14.)

14. If we inquire in what manner the "mystery of iniquity," the energy of Satan, began to work again in the Christian church, we shall find it wrought in quite a different way; putting on quite another shape: partiality crept in among the Christian believers. Those by whom the distribution to every one was made had respect of persons; largely supplying those of their own nation, while the other widows who were not Hebrews "were neglected in the daily administration." (Acts vi. 1.) Distribution was not made to them according as every one had need. Here was a manifest breach of brotherly love in the Hebrews; a sin both against justice and mercy: seeing the Grecians, as well as the Hebrews, had "sold all they had, and laid the price at the apostles' feet." See the second plague that broke in upon the Christian church!—partiality; respect of persons; too much regard for those of our own side; and too little for others, though equally worthy.

15. The infection did not stop here, but one evil produced many more. From partiality in the Hebrews, "there arose in the Grecians a murmuring against" them; not only discontent and resentful thoughts, but words suitable thereto; unkind expressions, hard speeches, evil-speaking, and backbiting, naturally followed. And by the "root of bitterness" thus "springing up," undoubtedly "many were defiled." The apostles indeed soon found out a means of removing the occasion of this murmuring; yet so much of the evil root remained, that God saw it needful to use a severer remedy. He let loose the world upon them all; if haply by their sufferings, by the spoiling of their goods, by pain, imprisonment, and death itself, he might at once punish and amend them. And persecution, God's last remedy for a backsliding people, had the happy effect for which he intended it. Both the partiality of the Hebrews ceased, and the murmuring of the

Grecians: and "then had the churches rest, and were edified;" built up in the love of God and one another; "and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." (Acts ix. 31.)

16. It seems to have been some time after this, that "the mystery of iniquity" began to work in the form of zeal. Great troubles arose by means of some who zealously contended for circumcision, and the rest of the ceremonial law; till the apostles and elders put an end to the spreading evil, by that final determination,—"It seemed good unto the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." (xv. 28, 29.) Yet was not this evil so thoroughly suppressed, but that it frequently broke out again; as we learn from various parts of St. Paul's Epistles, particularly that to the Galatians.

17. Nearly allied to this was another grievous evil, which at the same time sprang up in the church;—want of mutual forbearance, and, of consequence, anger, strife, contention, variance. One very remarkable instance of this we find in this very chapter. When "Paul said to Barnabas, Let us visit the brethren where we have preached the word, Barnabas determined to take with him John;" because he was "his sister's son." "But Paul thought it not good to take him who had deserted them before." And he had certainly reason on his side. But Barnabas resolved to have his own way. *Εγενετο ουν παροξυσμος*,—*and there was a fit of anger*. It does not say on St. Paul's side: Barnabas only had passion, to supply the want of reason. Accordingly, he departed from the work, and went home; while St. Paul went forward "through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches." (Verse 41.)

18. The very first society of Christians at Rome were not altogether free from this evil leaven. There were "divisions and offences" among them also; (Rom. xvi. 17;) although, in general, they seemed to have "walked

in love." But how early did "the mystery of iniquity" work, and how powerfully, in the church at Corinth. Not only schisms and heresies, animosities, fierce and bitter contentions were among them; but open, actual sins; yea, "such fornication as was not named among the heathens." (1 Cor. v. 1.) Nay, there was need to remind them that "neither adulterers, nor thieves, nor drunkards" could "enter into the kingdom of heaven." (vi. 9, 10.) And in all St. Paul's Epistles we meet with abundant proof, that tares grew up with the wheat in all the churches, and that "the mystery of iniquity" did everywhere, in a thousand forms, counterwork "the mystery of godliness."

19. When St. James wrote his Epistle, directed more immediately "to the twelve tribes scattered abroad," to the converted Jews, the tares sown among this wheat had produced a plentiful harvest. That grand pest of Christianity, a faith without works, was spread far and wide; filling the church with a "wisdom from beneath," which was "earthly, sensual, devilish," and which gave rise, not only to rash judging and evil-speaking, but to "envy, strife, confusion, and every evil work." Indeed, whoever peruses the fourth and fifth chapters of this Epistle, with serious attention, will be inclined to believe, that even in this early period the tares had nigh choked the wheat; and that among most of those to whom St. James wrote no more than the form of godliness, if so much, was left.

20. St. Peter wrote about the same time "to the strangers," the Christians, "scattered abroad through" all those spacious provinces of "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia" Minor, "and Bithynia." These, probably, were some of the most eminent Christians that were then in the world. Yet how exceeding far were even these from being "without spot and blemish?" And what grievous tares were here also growing up with the wheat! Some of them were "bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them:" (2 Pet. ii. 1, &c.;) and "many followed their pernicious

ways;" of whom the apostle gives that terrible character, "They walk after the flesh," in the "lust of uncleanness, like brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed. Spots they are, and blemishes, while they feast with you;" (in the "feasts of charity," then celebrated throughout the whole church;) "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, for whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." And yet these very men were called Christians, and were even then in the bosom of the church! Nor does the apostle mention them as infecting any one particular church only; but as a general plague, which even then was dispersed far and wide among all the Christians to whom he wrote!

21. Such is the authentic account of "the mystery of iniquity" working even in the apostolic churches!—an account given, not by the Jews or heathens, but by the apostles themselves. To this we may add the account which is given by the Head and Founder of the church; Him "who holds the stars in his right hand;" who is "the faithful and true witness." We may easily infer what was the state of the church in general, from the state of the seven churches in Asia. One of these, indeed, the church of Philadelphia, "had kept his word, and had not denied his name;" (Rev. iii. 8;) the church of Smyrna was likewise in a flourishing state: but all the rest were corrupted, more or less; insomuch that many of them were not a jot better than the present race of Christians; and our Lord then threatened, what he has long since performed, to "remove the candlestick" from them.

22. Such was the real state of the Christian church, even during the first century; while not only St. John, but most of the apostles were present with and presided over it. But what a mystery is this, that the All-wise, the All-gracious, the Almighty should suffer it so to be, not in one only, but, as far as we can learn, in every Christian society, those of Smyrna and Philadelphia

excepted ! And how came these to be excepted ? Why were these less corrupted (to go no farther) than the other churches of Asia ? It seems, because they were less wealthy. The Christians in Philadelphia were not literally "increased in goods," like those in Ephesus or Laodicea ; and if the Christians at Smyrna had acquired more wealth, it was swept away by persecution. So that these, having less of this world's goods, retained more of the simplicity and purity of the gospel.

23. But how contrary is this scriptural account of the ancient Christians to the ordinary apprehensions of men ! We have been apt to imagine, that the primitive church was all excellence and perfection ; answerable to that strong description which St. Peter cites from Moses : "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." And such, without all doubt, the first Christian church, which commenced at the day of Pentecost, was. But how soon did the fine gold become dim ! How soon was the wine mixed with water ! How little time elapsed, before the "god of this world" so far regained his empire, that Christians in general were scarce distinguishable from heathens, save by their opinions and modes of worship !

24. And if the state of the church in the very first century was so bad, we cannot suppose it was any better in the second. Undoubtedly it grew worse and worse. Tertullian, one of the most eminent Christians of that age, has given us an account of it in various parts of his writings, whence we learn that real, internal religion was hardly found ; nay, that not only the tempers of the Christians were exactly the same with those of their heathen neighbours, (pride, passion, love of the world, reigning alike in both,) but their lives and manners also. The bearing a faithful testimony against the general corruption of Christians seems to have raised the outcry against Montanus ; and against Tertullian himself, when he was convinced that the testimony of Montanus was true. As to the heresies fathered upon Montanus, it is not easy to find what they were. I

believe his grand heart was, the maintaining that "without" inward and outward holiness no man can see the Lord."

25. Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, in every respect an unexceptionable witness, who flourished about the middle of the third century, has left us abundance of letters, in which he gives a large and particular account of the state of religion in his time. In reading this, one would be apt to imagine he was reading an account of the present century: so totally void of true religion were the generality both of the laity and clergy, so immersed in ambition, envy, covetousness, luxury, and all other vices, that the Christians of Africa were then exactly the same as the Christians of England are now.

26. It is true, that during this whole period, during the first three centuries, there were intermixed longer or shorter seasons wherein true Christianity revived. In those seasons the justice and mercy of God let loose the heathens upon the Christians. Many of these were then called to resist unto blood. And the "blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church." The apostolic spirit returned; and many "counted not their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy." Many others were reduced to a happy poverty; and being stripped of what they had loved too well, they "remembered from whence they were fallen, and repented, and did their first works."

27. Persecution never did, never could, give any lasting wound to genuine Christianity. But the greatest it ever received, the grand blow which was struck at the very root of that humble, gentle, patient love, which is the fulfilling of the Christian law, the whole essence of true religion, was struck in the fourth century by Constantine the Great, when he called himself a Christian, and poured in a flood of riches, honours, and power upon the Christians; more especially upon the clergy. Then was fulfilled in the Christian church, what Sallust says of the people of Rome: *Sublatâ imperiî amulâ, non sensim, sed præcipiti cursu, a virtutibus descitum,*

*ad vitia transcursum.** Just so, when the fear of persecution was removed, and wealth and honour attended the Christian profession, the Christians "did not gradually sink, but rushed headlong into all manner of vices." Then "the mystery of iniquity" was no more hid, but stalked abroad in the face of the sun. Then, not the golden, but the iron age of the church commenced : then one might truly say,

Protinus irrupit venæ peioris in ævum
Omne nefas; fugère pudor, verumque, fidesque,
In quorum subière locum fraudesque, dolique,
Insidiæque, et vis, et amor sceleratus habendi.

"At once, in that unhappy age, broke in
All wickedness, and every deadly sin :
Truth, modesty, and love fled far away,
And force, and thirst of gold, claim'd universal sway."

28. And this is the event which most Christian expositors mention with such triumph ! yea, which some of them suppose to be typified in the Revelation, by "the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven !" Rather say, it was the coming of Satan and all his legions from the bottomless pit : seeing from that very time he hath set up his throne over the face of the whole earth, and reigned over the Christian as well as the pagan world with hardly any control ! Historians, indeed, tell us, very gravely, of nations, in every century, who were by such and such (*saints*, without doubt !) converted to Christianity : but still these converts practised all kinds of abominations, exactly as they did before ; no way differing, either in their tempers or in their lives, from the nations that were still called heathens. Such has been the deplorable state of the Christian church, from the time of Constantine till the Reformation. A Christian nation, a Christian city,

* Mr. Wesley doubtless quoted from memory ; and this accounts for the slight mistake into which he has here fallen. The passage referred to does not occur in Sallust, but in Velleius Paterculus, and reads thus :—*Remoto Carthaginis metu, sublatâque imperii æmulâ, non gradu, sed præcipiti cursu, à virtute descitum, ad vitia transcursum.* Lib. ii., cap. 1.—EDIT.

(according to the scriptural model,) was nowhere to be seen; but every city and country, a few individuals excepted, was plunged in all manner of wickedness.

29. Has the case been altered since the Reformation? Does "the mystery of iniquity" no longer work in the church? No: the Reformation itself has not extended to above one-third of the Western Church; so that two-thirds of this remain as they were: so do the Eastern, Southern, and Northern Churches. They are as full of heathenish, or worse than heathenish, abominations, as ever they were before. And what is the condition of the Reformed Churches? It is certain that they were reformed in their opinions, as well as their modes of worship. But is not this all? Were either their tempers or lives reformed? Not at all. Indeed, many of the Reformers themselves complained, that "the Reformation was not carried far enough." But what did they mean? Why, that they did not sufficiently reform the *rites and ceremonies* of the church. Ye fools and blind! to fix your whole attention on the circumstantial of religion! Your complaint ought to have been, the essentials of religion were not carried far enough! You ought vehemently to have insisted on an entire change of men's *tempers and lives*; on their showing they had "the mind that was in Christ," by "walking as he also walked." Without this, how exquisitely trifling was the reformation of opinions and rites and ceremonies! Now, let any one survey the state of Christianity in the Reformed parts of Switzerland; in Germany, or France; in Sweden, Denmark, Holland; in Great Britain and Ireland. How little are any of these Reformed Christians better than heathen nations! Have they more, (I will not say communion with God, although there is no Christianity without it,) but have they more justice, mercy, or truth, than the inhabitants of China, or Indostan? Oh, no! we must acknowledge, with sorrow and shame, that we are far beneath them;

"That we who by thy Name are named,
The heathens unbaptized out-sin!"

30. Is not this the *falling away* or *apostasy* from God, foretold by St. Paul in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians? (ii. 3.) Indeed, I would not dare to say, with George Fox, that this apostasy was universal; that there never were any real Christians in the world, from the days of the apostles till his time. But we may boldly say, that wherever Christianity has spread, the apostasy has spread also; insomuch that, although there are now, and always have been, individuals who were real Christians; yet the whole world never did, nor can at this day, show a Christian country or city.

31. I would now refer it to every man of reflection, who believes the Scriptures to be of God, whether this general apostasy does not imply the necessity of a general reformation? Without allowing this, how can we possibly justify either the wisdom or goodness of God? According to Scripture, the Christian religion was designed for "the healing of the nations;" for the saving from sin, by means of the Second Adam, all that were "constituted sinners" by the first. But it does not answer this end: it never did; unless for a short time at Jerusalem. What can we say, but that, if it have not yet, it surely will answer it? The time is coming, when not only "all Israel shall be saved," but "the fulness of the Gentiles will come in." The time cometh, when "violence shall no more be heard in the earth, wasting or destruction in our borders;" but every city shall call her "walls Salvation, and her gates Praise;" when the people, saith the Lord, "shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." (Isa. lx. 18-21.)

32. From the preceding considerations we may learn the full answer to one of the grand objections of infidels against Christianity; namely, *the lives of Christians*. Of Christians, do you say? I doubt whether you ever knew a *Christian* in your life. When Tomio Chachi, the Indian chief, keenly replied to those who spoke to him

of being a Christian, "Why, *these* are Christians at Savannah! These are Christians at Frederica!"—the proper answer was, "No, they are not; they are no more Christians than you and Sinauky." "But are not these Christians in Canterbury, in London, in Westminster?" No; no more than they are angels. None are Christians, but they that have the mind which was in Christ, and walk as he walked. "Why, if these only are Christians," said an eminent wit, "I never saw a Christian yet." I believe it: you never did; and, perhaps, you never will; for you will never find them in the grand or the gay world. The few Christians that are upon the earth are only to be found where *you* never look for them. Never, therefore, urge this objection more: never object to Christianity the lives or tempers of heathens. Though they are called Christians, the name does not imply the thing: they are as far from this as hell from heaven!

33. We may learn from hence, secondly, the extent of the fall,—the astonishing spread of original corruption. What, among so many thousands, so many millions, is there "none righteous, no, not one?" Not by nature. But, including the grace of God, I will not say with the heathen poet,—

Rari quippe boni: numero vix sunt totidem, quot
Thebarum portæ, vel divitis ostia Nilî.*

As if he had allowed too much, in supposing there were a hundred good men in the Roman empire, he comes to himself, and affirms there are hardly seven. Nay, surely, there were seven thousand! There were so many long ago in one small nation, where Elijah supposed there were none at all. But, allowing a few exceptions, we are authorized to say, "The whole world lieth in wickedness;" yea, "in the wicked one," as the words properly signify.

* The following is Gifford's translation of this quotation from Juvenal:—

"THE GOOD ARE FEW! 'the valued file'
Scarcely pass the gates of Thebes, the mouths of Nile."—EDIT.

"Yes, the whole heathen world." Yea, and the Christian too;—(so called;) for where is the difference, save in a few externals? See with your own eyes! Look into that large country, Indostan. There are Christians and heathens too. Which have more justice, mercy, and truth? the Christians or the heathens? Which are most corrupt, infernal, devilish, in their tempers and practice? the English or the Indians? Which have desolated whole countries, and clogged the rivers with dead bodies?

"O sacred name of Christian! how profaned!"

O earth, earth, earth! how dost thou groan under the villainies of thy *Christian* inhabitants!

34. From many of the preceding circumstances we may learn, thirdly, what is the genuine tendency of riches; what a baleful influence they have had, in all ages, upon pure and undefiled religion. Not that money is an evil of itself: it is applicable to good as well as bad purposes. But, nevertheless, it is an undoubted truth, that "the love of money is the root of all evil;" and also, that the possession of riches naturally breeds the love of them. Accordingly, it is an old remark,

Crescit amor nummi, quantum ipsa pecunia crescit:

"As money increases, so does the love of it:" and always will, without a miracle of grace. Although, therefore, other causes may concur; yet this has been, in all ages, the principal cause of the decay of true religion in every Christian community. As long as the Christians in any place were poor, they were devoted to God. While they had little of the world, they did not love the world; but the more they had of it, the more they loved it. This constrained the Lover of their souls, at various times, to unchain their persecutors; who, by reducing them to their former poverty, reduced them to their former purity. But still remember, riches have, in all ages, been the bane of genuine Christianity.

35. We may learn hence, fourthly, how great watchfulness they need who desire to be real Christians; con-

sidering what a state the world is in ! May not each of them well say,

“Into a world of ruffians sent,
I walk on hostile ground;
Wild human bears, on slaughter bent,
And ravening wolves surround.”

They are the more dangerous, because they commonly appear in sheep's clothing. Even those who do not pretend to religion, yet make fair professions of good-will, of readiness to serve us, and, perhaps, of truth and honesty. But beware of taking their word ! Trust not any man, until he fears God ! It is a great truth,

“He that fears no God can love no friend.”

Therefore stand upon your guard against every one that is not earnestly seeking to save his soul. We have need to keep both our heart and mouth as “with a bridle, while the ungodly are in our sight.” Their conversation, their spirit, is infectious, and steals upon us unawares, we know not how. “Happy is the man that feareth always,” in this sense also, lest he should partake of other men's sins. Oh, “keep thyself pure !” “Watch and pray, that thou enter not into temptation !”

36. We may learn from hence, lastly, what thankfulness becomes those who have escaped the corruption that is in the world ; whom God hath chosen out of the world, to be holy and unblamable. “Who is it that maketh thee to differ ?” “And what hast thou which thou hast not received ?” Is it not “God” alone “who worketh in thee both to will and to do of his good pleasure ?” “And let those give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed and delivered from the hand of the enemy.” Let us praise him, that he hath given us to see the deplorable state of all that are round about us, to see the wickedness which overflows the earth, and yet not be borne away by the torrent ! We see the general, the almost universal, contagion ; and yet it cannot approach to hurt us ! Thanks be to Him “who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth still deliver !”

And have we not further ground for thankfulness, yea, and strong consolation, in the blessed hope which God hath given us, that the time is at hand, when righteousness shall be as universal as unrighteousness is now? Allowing that "the whole creation now groaneth together" under the sin of man, our comfort is, it will not always groan: God will arise and maintain his own cause; and the whole creation shall then be delivered both from moral and natural corruption. Sin, and its consequence, pain, shall be no more: holiness and happiness will cover the earth. Then shall all the ends of the world see the salvation of our God; and the whole race of mankind shall know, and love, and serve God, and reign with him for ever and ever!

SERMON LXII.

THE END OF CHRIST'S COMING.

“For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”—1 JOHN iii. 8.

1. MANY eminent writers, heathen as well as Christian, both in earlier and later ages, have employed their utmost labour and art in painting the beauty of virtue. And the same pains they have taken to describe, in the liveliest colours, the deformity of vice; both of vice in general, and of those particular vices which were most prevalent in their respective ages and countries. With equal care they have placed in a strong light the happiness that attends virtue, and the misery which usually accompanies vice, and always follows it. And it may be acknowledged, that treatises of this kind are not wholly without their use. Probably hereby some, on the one hand, have been stirred up to desire and follow after virtue; and some, on the other hand, checked in their career of vice,—perhaps reclaimed from it, at least for a season. But the change effected in men by these means is seldom either deep or universal: much less is it durable; in a little space it vanishes away as the morning cloud. Such motives are far too feeble to overcome the numberless temptations that surround us. All that can be said of the beauty and advantage of virtue, and the deformity and ill effects of vice, cannot resist, and much less overcome and heal, one irregular appetite or passion.

“All these fences, and their whole array,
One cunning bosom-sin sweeps quite away.”

2. There is, therefore, an absolute necessity, if ever

we would conquer vice, or steadily persevere in the practice of virtue, to have arms of a better kind than these; otherwise, we may see what is right, but we cannot attain it. Many of the men of reflection among the very heathens were deeply sensible of this. The language of their heart was that of Medea:—

Video meliora, proboque:

Deteriora sequor:

how exactly agreeing with the words of the apostle, (personating a man convinced of sin, but not yet conquering it,) “The good that I would, I do not; but the evil I would not, that I do!” The impotence of the human mind, even the Roman philosopher could discover: “There is in every man,” says he, “this weakness,” (he might have said, this sore disease,) “*gloriæ sitis*,—thirst for glory. Nature points out the disease; but nature shows us no remedy.”

3. Nor is it strange, that though they sought for a remedy, yet they found none. For they sought it where it never was and never will be found, namely, in themselves; in reason, in philosophy: broken reeds, bubbles, smoke! They did not seek it in God, in whom alone it is possible to find it. In God! No; they totally disclaim this; and that in the strongest terms. For although Cicero, one of their oracles, once stumbled upon that strange truth, *Nemo unquam vir magnus sine afflatu divino fuit*,—“There never was any great man who was not divinely inspired;” yet in the very same tract he contradicts himself, and totally overthrows his own assertion, by asking, *Quis pro virtute aut sapientia gratias dedit Deis unquam?*—“Who ever returned thanks to God for his virtue or wisdom?” The Roman poet is, if possible, more express still; who, after mentioning several outward blessings, honestly adds,—

Hæc satis est orare Jovem, qui donat et aufert;
Det vitam, det opes; æquum mî animum ipse parabo.

“We ask of God what he can give or take,—

Life, wealth; but virtuous I myself will make.”

4. The best of them either sought virtue partly from God and partly from themselves, or sought it from those gods who were indeed but devils, and so not likely to make their votaries better than themselves. So dim was the light of the wisest of men, till "life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel;" till "the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil!"

But what are "the works of the devil" here mentioned? How was "the Son of God manifested" to destroy them? And how, in what manner, and by what steps, does he actually "destroy" them? These three very important points we may consider in their order.

1. And, first, what these "works of the devil" are, we learn from the words preceding and following the text: "We know that he was manifested to take away our sins." (Verse 5.) "Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, seeth him not, neither knoweth him." (Verse 6.) "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (Verse 8.) "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin." (Verse 9.) From the whole of this it appears, that "the works of the devil," here spoken of, are sin, and the fruits of sin.

2. But since the wisdom of God has now dissipated the clouds which so long covered the earth, and put an end to the childish conjectures of men concerning these things, it may be of use to take a more distinct view of these "works of the devil," so far as the oracles of God instruct us. It is true, the design of the Holy Spirit was to assist our faith, not gratify our curiosity; and therefore the account he has given in the first chapters of Genesis is exceeding short. Nevertheless, it is so clear that we may learn therefrom whatsoever it concerns us to know.

3. To take the matter from the beginning: "The

Lord God" (literally, JEHOVAH the GODS ; that is, One and Three) "created man in his own image ;"—in his own *natural* image, as to his better part ; that is, a spirit, as God is a spirit ; endued with understanding ; which, if not the essence, seems to be the most essential property, of a spirit. And probably the human spirit, like the angelical, then discerned truth by intuition. Hence he named every creature, as soon as he saw it, according to its inmost nature. Yet his knowledge was limited, as he was a creature : ignorance, therefore, was inseparable from him : but error was not ; it does not appear that he was mistaken in any thing. But he was capable of mistaking, of being deceived, although not necessitated to it.

4. He was endued also with a will, with various affections, (which are only the will exerting itself various ways,) that he might love, desire, and delight in that which is good ; otherwise, his understanding had been to no purpose. He was likewise endued with liberty ; a power of choosing what was good, and refusing what was not so. Without this, both the will and the understanding would have been utterly useless. Indeed, without liberty, man had been so far from being a *free agent*, that he could have been no *agent* at all. For every *unfree being* is purely passive ; not active in any degree. Have you a sword in your hand ? Does a man, stronger than you, seize your hand, and force you to wound a third person ? In this you are no *agent*, any more than the sword : the hand is as passive as the steel. So in every possible case. He that is not free is not an *agent*, but a *patient*.

5. It seems, therefore, that every spirit in the universe, as such, is endued with *understanding*, and, in consequence, with a *will*, and with a measure of *liberty* ; and that these three are inseparably united in every intelligent nature. And observe, *liberty necessitated*, or overruled, is really no liberty at all. It is a contradiction in terms. It is the same as *unfree freedom* ; that is, downright nonsense.

6. It may be farther observed, (and it is an important

observation,) that where there is no liberty, there can be no moral good or evil, no virtue or vice. The fire warms us; yet it is not capable of virtue: it burns us; yet this is no vice. There is no virtue, but where an intelligent being knows, loves, and chooses what is good; nor is there any vice, but where such a being knows, loves, and chooses what is evil.

7. And God created man, not only in his natural, but likewise in his own *moral* image. He created him not only "in knowledge," but also in righteousness and true holiness. As his understanding was without blemish, perfect in its kind; so were all his affections. They were all set right, and duly exercised on their proper objects. And as a free agent, he steadily chose whatever was good, according to the direction of his understanding. In so doing, he was unspeakably happy; dwelling in God, and God in him; having an uninterrupted fellowship with the Father and the Son, through the eternal Spirit; and the continual testimony of his conscience, that all his ways were good and acceptable to God.

8. Yet his liberty (as was observed before) necessarily included a power of choosing or refusing either good or evil. Indeed, it has been doubted whether man could then choose evil, knowing it to be such. But it cannot be doubted, he might mistake evil for good. He was not infallible; therefore, not impeccable. And this unravels the whole difficulty of the grand question, *Unde malum?* "How came evil into the world?" It came from "Lucifer, son of the morning." It was the work of the devil. "For the devil," saith the apostle, "sineth from the beginning:" that is, was the first sinner in the universe, the author of sin, the first being who, by the abuse of his liberty, introduced evil into the creation. He,

"Of the first,
If not the first archangel,"

was self-tempted to think too highly of himself. He freely yielded to the temptation: and gave way, first

to pride, then to self-will. He said, "I will sit upon the sides of the north : I will be like the Most High." He did not fall alone, but soon drew after him a third part of the stars of heaven : in consequence of which they lost their glory and happiness, and were driven from their former habitation.

9. "Having great wrath," and perhaps envy, at the happiness of the creatures whom God had newly created, it is not strange that he should desire and endeavour to deprive them of it. In order to this, he concealed himself in the serpent, who was the most subtle, or intelligent, of all the brute creatures ; and, on that account, the least liable to raise suspicion. Indeed, some have (not improbably) supposed that the serpent was then endued with reason and speech. Had not Eve known he was so, would she have admitted any parley with him ? Would she not have been frightened, rather than deceived ? as the apostle observes she was. To deceive her, Satan mingled truth with falsehood,—“Hath God said, Ye may not eat of every tree of the garden ?”—and soon after persuaded her to disbelieve God, to suppose his threatening should not be fulfilled. She then lay open to the whole temptation :—to “the desire of the flesh ;” for the tree “was good for food :” to “the desire of the eyes ;” for it was “pleasant to the eyes :” and to the “pride of life ;” for it was “to be desired to make one wise,” and consequently honoured. So unbelief begot pride. She thought herself wiser than God ; capable of finding a better way to happiness than God had taught her. It begot self-will : she was determined to do her own will, not the will of Him that made her. It begot foolish desires ; and completed all by outward sin : “she took of the fruit, and did eat.”

10. She then “gave to her husband, and he did eat.” And in that day, yea, that moment, he *died* ! The life of God was extinguished in his soul. The glory departed from him. He lost the whole moral image of God,—righteousness and true holiness. He was unholy ; he was unhappy ; he was full of sin ; full of guilt and

tormenting fears. Being broke off from God, and looking upon him now as an angry Judge, "he was afraid." But how was his understanding darkened, to think he could "hide himself from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the garden!" Thus was his soul utterly dead to God! And in that day his body likewise began to die,—became obnoxious to weakness, sickness, pain, all preparatory to the death of the body, which naturally led to eternal death.

II. Such are "the works of the devil;" sin and its fruits; considered in their order and connection. We are, in the second place, to consider how "the Son of God was manifested" in order to destroy them.

1. He was manifested as the only begotten Son of God, in glory equal with the Father, to the inhabitants of heaven before and at the foundation of the world. These "morning stars sang together," all these "sons of God shouted for joy," when they heard him pronounce, "Let there be light; and there was light;"—when he "spread the north over the empty space," and "stretched out the heavens as a curtain." Indeed, it was the universal belief of the ancient church, that God the Father none hath seen, nor can see; that from all eternity He hath dwelt in light unapproachable—and it is only in and by the Son of his love that he hath, at any time, revealed himself to his creatures.

2. How the Son of God was manifested to our first parents in paradise it is not easy to determine. It is generally, and not improbably, supposed that he appeared to them in the form of a man, and conversed with them face to face. Not that I can at all believe the ingenious dream of Dr. Watts concerning "the glorious humanity of Christ," which he supposes to have existed before the world began, and to have been endued with I know not what astonishing powers. Nay, I look upon this to be an exceeding dangerous, yea, mischievous hypothesis; as it quite excludes the force of very many scriptures which have been hitherto thought to prove the Godhead of the Son. And I am afraid it was the grand means

of turning that great man aside from the faith once delivered to the saints;—that is, if he was turned aside; if that beautiful soliloquy be genuine which is printed among his posthumous works, wherein he so earnestly beseeches the Son of God not to be displeased because he cannot believe him to be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father.

3. May we not reasonably believe it was by similar appearances that He was manifested, in succeeding ages, to Enoch, while he “walked with God;” to Noah, before and after the deluge; to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, on various occasions; and, to mention no more, to Moses? This seems to be the natural meaning of the word: “My servant Moses is faithful in all my house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of Jehovah shall he behold;” namely, the Son of God.

4. But all these were only types of his grand manifestation. It was in the fulness of time, (in just the middle age of the world, as a great man largely proves,) that God “brought his first-begotten into the world, made of a woman,” by the power of the Highest overshadowing her. He was afterwards manifested to the shepherds; to devout Simeon; to Anna, the prophetess; and to “all that waited for redemption in Jerusalem.”

5. When he was of due age for executing his priestly office, he was manifested to Israel; preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God in every town and in every city. And for a time he was glorified by all, who acknowledged that he “spake as never man spake;” that he “spake as one having authority,” with all the wisdom of God and the power of God. He was manifested by numberless “signs, and wonders, and mighty works which he did,” as well as by his whole life: being the only one born of a woman “who knew no sin,” who, from his birth to his death, did “all things well;” doing continually “not his own will, but the will of Him that sent him.”

6. After all, “behold the Lamb of God, taking away
1)

the sin of the world!" This was a more glorious manifestation of himself than any he had made before. How wonderfully was he manifested to angels and men, when he "was wounded for our transgressions;" when he "bore all our sins in his own body on the tree;" when, having "by that one oblation of himself once offered, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," he cried out, "It is finished," and "bowed his head and gave up the ghost!" We need but just mention those farther manifestations,—his resurrection from the dead; his ascension into heaven, into the glory which he had before the world began; and his pouring out the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; both of which are beautifully described in those well-known words of the psalmist: "Thou art gone up on high, thou hast led captivity captive, and hast received gifts for men; yea, even for thine enemies, that the Lord God might dwell among" or in "them."

7. "That the Lord God might dwell in them:" this refers to a yet farther manifestation of the Son of God, even his inward manifestation of himself. When he spoke of this to his apostles but a little before his death, one of them immediately asked, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not unto the world?" By enabling us to believe in his name. For he is then inwardly manifested to us when we are enabled to say with confidence, "My Lord and my God!" Then each of us can boldly say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." And it is by thus manifesting himself in our hearts that he effectually "destroys the works of the devil."

III. 1. How he does this, in what manner, and by what steps, he does actually "destroy" them, we are now to consider. And, first, as Satan began his first work in Eve by tainting her with unbelief, so the Son of God begins his work in man by enabling us to believe in him. He both opens and enlightens the eyes of our

understanding. Out of darkness he commands light to shine, and takes away the veil which the "god of this world" had spread over our hearts. And we then see not by a chain of *reasoning*, but by a kind of *intuition*, by a direct view, that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their former trespasses;" not imputing them to me. In that day, "we know that we are of God," children of God by faith; "having redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;"—that peace which enables us in every state therewith to be content; which delivers us from all perplexing doubts, from all tormenting fears: and, in particular, from that "fear of death whereby we were all our lifetime subject to bondage."

2. At the same time the Son of God strikes at the root of that grand work of the devil,—pride; causing the sinner to humble himself before the Lord, to abhor himself, as it were, in dust and ashes. He strikes at the root of self-will; enabling the humbled sinner to say in all things, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." He destroys the love of the world; delivering them that believe in him from "every foolish and hurtful desire;" from the "desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life." He saves them from seeking, or expecting to find, happiness in any creature. As Satan turned the heart of man from the Creator to the creature; so the Son of God turns his heart back again from the creature to the Creator. Thus it is, by manifesting himself, he destroys the works of the devil; restoring the guilty outcast from God, to his favour, to pardon and peace; the sinner in whom dwelleth no good thing, to love and holiness; the burdened, miserable sinner, to joy unspeakable, to real, substantial happiness.

3. But it may be observed, that the Son of God does not destroy the whole work of the devil in man, as long as he remains in this life. He does not yet destroy

bodily weakness, sickness, pain, and a thousand infirmities incident to flesh and blood. He does not destroy all that weakness of understanding which is the natural consequence of the soul's dwelling in a corruptible body; so that still,

Humanum est errare et nescire :

"both ignorance and error belong to humanity." He intrusts us with only an exceeding small share of knowledge, in our present state; lest our knowledge should interfere with our humility, and we should again affect to be as gods. It is to remove from us all temptation to pride, and all thought of independency, (which is the very thing that men in general so earnestly covet under the name of *liberty*,) that he leaves us encompassed with all these infirmities, particularly weakness of understanding; till the sentence takes place, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return!"

4. Then error, pain, and all bodily infirmities cease: all these are destroyed by death. And death itself, "the last enemy" of man, shall be destroyed at the resurrection. The moment that we hear the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, "then shall be fulfilled the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." "This corruptible" body "shall put on incorruption; this mortal" body "shall put on immortality;" and the Son of God, manifested in the clouds of heaven, shall destroy this last work of the devil!

5. Here then we see in the clearest, strongest light, what is real religion: a restoration of man, by Him that bruises the serpent's head, to all that the old serpent deprived him of; a restoration, not only to the favour but likewise to the image of God, implying not barely deliverance from sin, but the being filled with the fulness of God. It is plain, if we attend to the preceding considerations, that nothing short of this is Christian religion. Every thing else, whether negative or external, is utterly wide of the mark. But what a paradox is this! How little is it understood in the Christian world; yea, in this enlightened age, wherein it is taken for granted,

the world is wiser than ever it was from the beginning. Among all our discoveries, who has discovered this? How few, either among the learned or unlearned! And yet, if we believe the Bible, who can deny it? Who can doubt of it? It runs through the Bible from the beginning to the end, in one connected chain; and the agreement of every part of it with every other is properly the analogy of faith. Beware of taking any thing else, or any thing less than this, for religion. Not *any thing else*: do not imagine an outward form, a round of duties, both in public and private, is religion! Do not suppose that honesty, justice, and whatever is called *morality*, (though excellent in its place,) is religion! And least of all dream that orthodoxy, right opinion, (vulgarly called *faith*,) is religion. Of all religious dreams, this is the vainest; which takes hay and stubble for gold tried in the fire!

6. Oh, do not take *any thing less than this* for the religion of Jesus Christ! Do not take part of it for the whole! What God hath joined together, put not asunder! Take no less for his religion, than the "faith that worketh by love;" all inward and outward holiness. Be not content with any religion which does not imply the destruction of all the works of the devil; that is, of all sin. We know, weakness of understanding, and a thousand infirmities, will remain, while this corruptible body remains; but sin need not remain: this is that work of the devil, eminently so called, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy in this present life. He is able, he is willing, to destroy it now, in all that believe in him. Only be not straitened in your own bowels! Do not distrust his power, or his love! Put his promise to the proof! He hath spoken; and is he not ready likewise to perform? Only "come boldly to the throne of grace," trusting in his mercy; and you shall find, "He saveth to the uttermost all those that come to God through him!"

HYMN.

JESUS, thou hast bid us pray,
 Pray always, and not faint ;
 With the word a power convey
 To utter our complaint :
 Quiet shalt thou never know,
 Till we from sin are fully freed ;
 Oh, avenge us of our foe,
 And bruise the serpent's head !

We have now begun to cry,
 And we will never end,
 Till we find salvation nigh,
 And grasp the sinner's Friend :
 Day and night we'll speak our wo,
 With thee importunately plead :
 Oh, avenge us of our foe,
 And bruise the serpent's head !

Speak the word, and we shall be
 From all our bands released ;
 Only thou canst set us free,
 By Satan long oppress'd :
 Now thy power almighty show ;
 Arise, the Woman's conquering Seed :
 Oh, avenge us of our foe,
 And bruise the serpent's head !

To destroy his work of sin,
 Thyself in us reveal ;
 Manifest thyself within
 Our flesh, and fully dwell
 With us, in us, here below ;
 Enter, and make us free indeed :
 Oh, avenge us of our foe,
 And bruise the serpent's head !

Stronger than the strong man, thou
His fury canst control :
Cast him out, by entering now,
And keep our ransom'd soul ;
Satan's kingdom overthrow,
On all the powers of darkness tread ;
Oh, avenge us of our foe,
And bruise the serpent's head !

To the never-ceasing cries
Of thine elect attend ;
Send deliverance from the skies,
The mighty Spirit send :
Though to man thou seemest slow,
Our cries thou seemest not to heed ;
Oh, avenge us of our foe,
And bruise the serpent's head !

Come, oh, come, all-glorious Lord !
No longer now delay ;
With thy Spirit's two-edged sword
The crooked serpent slay !
Bare thine arm, and give the blow,
Root out and kill the hellish seed ;
Oh, avenge us of our foe,
And bruise the serpent's head !

Jesus, hear thy Spirit call,
Thy bride, who bids thee come,
Come, thou righteous Judge of all,
Pronounce the tempter's doom ;
Doom him to infernal wo,
For him and for his angels made ;
Now avenge us of our foe,
For ever bruise his head !

SERMON LXIII.

THE GENERAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL.

“The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”—ISA. xi. 9.

1. IN what a condition is the world at present ! How does darkness, intellectual darkness, ignorance, with vice and misery attendant upon it, cover the face of the earth ! From the accurate inquiry made with indefatigable pains by our ingenious countryman, Mr. Brerewood ; (who travelled himself over a great part of the known world, in order to form the more exact judgment ;) supposing the world to be divided into thirty parts, nineteen of them are professed heathens, altogether as ignorant of Christ as if he had never come into the world : six of the remaining parts are professed Mohammedans : so that only five in thirty are so much as nominally Christians !

2. And let it be remembered, that since this computation was made, many new nations have been discovered ; numberless islands, particularly in the South Sea, large and well inhabited : but by whom ? By heathens of the basest sort ; many of them inferior to the beasts of the field. Whether they eat men or no, (which indeed I cannot find any sufficient ground to believe,) they certainly kill all that fall into their hands. They are, therefore, more savage than lions ; who kill no more creatures than are necessary to satisfy their present hunger. See the real dignity of human nature ! Here it appears in its genuine purity, not polluted either by those “general corrupters, kings,” or by the least

tincture of religion ! What will Abbè Raynal (that determined enemy to monarchy and revelation) say to this ?

3. A little, and but a little, above the heathens in religion, are the Mohammedans. But how far and wide has this miserable delusion spread over the face of the earth ! Insomuch that the Mohammedans are considerably more in number (as six to five) than Christians. And by all the accounts which have any pretence to authenticity, these are also, in general, as utter strangers to all true religion as their four-footed brethren ; as void of mercy as lions and tigers ; as much given up to brutal lusts as bulls or goats : so that they are in truth a disgrace to human nature, and a plague to all that are under the iron yoke.

4. It is true, a celebrated writer (Lady Mary Wortley Montague) gives a very different character of them. With the finest flow of words, in the most elegant language, she labours to wash the *Æthiop* white. She represents them as many degrees above the Christians ; as some of the most amiable people in the world ; as possessed of all the social virtues ; as some of the most accomplished of men. But I can in no wise receive her report : I cannot rely upon her authority. I believe those round about her had just as much religion as their admirer had when she was admitted into the interior parts of the Grand Seignior's seraglio. Notwithstanding, therefore, all that such a witness does or can say in their favour, I believe the Turks in general are little, if at all, better than the generality of the heathens.

5. And little, if at all, better than the Turks, are the Christians in the Turkish dominions ; even the best of them ; those that live in the Morea, or are scattered up and down in Asia. The more numerous bodies of Georgian, Circassian, Mengrelian Christians, are a proverb of reproach to the Turks themselves ; not only for their deplorable ignorance, but for their total, stupid, barbarous irreligion.

6. From the most authentic accounts we can obtain of the Southern Christians, those in Abyssinia, and of

the Northern churches, under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow, we have reason to fear they are much in the same condition, both with regard to knowledge and religion, as those in Turkey. Or if those in Abyssinia are more civilized, and have a larger share of knowledge, yet they do not appear to have any more religion than either the Mohammedans or pagans.

7. The Western churches seem to have the pre-eminence over all these in many respects. They have abundantly more knowledge: they have more scriptural and more rational modes of worship. Yet two-thirds of them are still involved in the corruptions of the church of Rome; and most of these are entirely unacquainted with either the theory or practice of religion. And as to those who are called Protestants, or Reformed, what acquaintance with it have they? Put Papists and Protestants, French and English together, the bulk of one and of the other nation; and what manner of Christians are they? Are they "holy as He that hath called them is holy?" Are they filled with "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" Is there "that mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus?" And do they "walk as Christ also walked?" Nay, they are as far from it as hell is from heaven!

8. Such is the present state of mankind in all parts of the world! But how astonishing is this, if there is a God in heaven, and if his eyes are over all the earth! Can he despise the work of his own hand? Surely this is one of the greatest mysteries under heaven! How is it possible to reconcile this with either the wisdom or goodness of God? And what can give ease to a thoughtful mind under so melancholy a prospect? What but the consideration, that things will not always be so; that another scene will soon be opened? God will be jealous of his honour: he will arise and maintain his own cause. He will judge the prince of this world, and spoil him of his usurped dominion. He will give his Son "the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession." "The

earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." The loving knowledge of God, producing uniform, uninterrupted holiness and happiness, shall cover the earth; shall fill every soul of man.

9. "Impossible," will some men say, "yea, the greatest of all impossibilities, that we should see a Christian world; yea, a Christian nation, or city! How can these things be?" On one supposition, indeed, not only all impossibility, but all difficulty vanishes away. Only suppose the Almighty to act *irresistibly*, and the thing is done; yea, with just the same ease as when "God said, Let there be light; and there was light." But then, man would be man no longer: his inmost nature would be changed. He would no longer be a moral agent, any more than the sun or the wind; as he would no longer be endued with liberty,—a power of choosing, or self-determination: consequently, he would no longer be capable of virtue or vice, of reward or punishment.

10. But setting aside this elusmy way of cutting the knot which we are not able to untie, how can all men be made holy and happy while they continue men? while they still enjoy both the understanding, the affections, and the liberty, which are essential to a moral agent? There seems to be a plain, simple way of removing this difficulty, without entangling ourselves in any subtle, metaphysical disquisitions. As God is One, so the work of God is uniform in all ages. May we then conceive how he *will* work on the souls of men in times to come, by considering how he *does* work *now*, and how he *has* wrought in times past?

11. Take one instance of this, and such an instance as you cannot easily be deceived in. You know how God wrought in *your own* soul, when he first enabled you to say, "The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." He did not take away your understanding; but enlightened and strengthened it. He did not destroy any of your affections: rather they were more vigorous than

before. Least of all did he take away your liberty ; your power of choosing good or evil : he did not *force* you ; but, being *assisted* by his grace, you, like Mary, *chose* the better part. Just so has he *assisted* five in one house to make that happy *choice* ; fifty or five hundred in one city ; and many thousands in a nation ;—without depriving any of them of that liberty which is essential to a moral agent

12. Not that I deny, that there are exempt cases, wherein

“The o’erwhelming power of saving grace”

does, for a time, work as irresistibly as lightning falling from heaven. But I speak of God’s general manner of working, of which I have known innumerable instances ; perhaps more within fifty years last past, than any one in England or in Europe. And with regard even to these exempt cases ; although God does work irresistibly *for the time*, yet I do not believe there is any human soul in which God works irresistibly *at all times*. Nay, I am fully persuaded there is not. I am persuaded, there are no men living that have not many times “resisted the Holy Ghost,” and made void “the counsel of God against themselves.” Yea, I am persuaded every child of God has had, at some time, “life and death set before him,” eternal life and eternal death ; and has in himself the casting voice. So true is that well-known saying of St. Austin, (one of the noblest he ever uttered,) *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis* : “He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves.” Now in the same manner as God *has* converted so many to himself without destroying their liberty, he *can* undoubtedly convert whole nations, or the whole world ; and it is as easy to him to convert a world, as one individual soul.

13. Let us observe what God has done already Between fifty and sixty years ago, God raised up a few young men, in the University of Oxford, to testify those grand truths, which were then little attended to :—that

without holiness no man shall see the Lord;—that this holiness is the work of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do;—that he doeth it of his own good pleasure merely for the merits of Christ;—that this holiness is the mind that was in Christ; enabling us to walk as he also walked;—that no man can be thus sanctified till he be justified;—and, that we are justified by faith alone. These great truths they declared on all occasions, in private and in public; having no design but to promote the glory of God, and no desire but to save souls from death.

14. From Oxford, where it first appeared, the little leaven spread wider and wider. More and more saw the truth as it is in Jesus, and received it in the love thereof. More and more found “redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.” They were born again of his Spirit, and filled with righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It afterwards spread to every part of the land, and a little one became a thousand. It then spread into North Britain and Ireland; and a few years after into New York, Pennsylvania, and many other provinces in America, even as high as Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. So that, although at first this “grain of mustard-seed” was “the least of all the seeds;” yet, in a few years, it grew into a “large tree, and put forth great branches.”

15. Generally, when these truths, justification by faith in particular, were declared in any large town, after a few days or weeks, there came suddenly on the great congregation,—not in a corner, at London, Bristol, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, in particular,—a violent and impetuous power which,

“Like mighty winds or torrents fierce,
Did then opposers all o’errun.”

And this frequently continued, with shorter or longer intervals, for several weeks or months. But it gradually subsided, and then the work of God was carried on by gentle degrees; while that Spirit, in watering the

seed that had been sown, in confirming and strengthening them that had believed,

“Deign’d his influence to infuse,
Secret, refreshing as the silent dews.”

And this difference in his usual manner of working was observable, not only in Great Britain and Ireland, but in every part of America, from South to North, wherever the word of God came with power.

16. Is it not then highly probable, that God will carry on his work in the same manner as he has begun? That he *will* carry it on, I cannot doubt: however Luther may affirm, that a revival of religion never lasts above a generation,—that is, thirty years; (whereas the present revival has already continued above fifty;) or however prophets of evil may say, “All will be at an end when the first instruments are removed” There will then, very probably, be a great shaking; but I cannot induce myself to think that God has wrought so glorious a work, to let it sink and die away in a few years. No: I trust, this is only the beginning of a far greater work; the dawn of “the latter-day glory.”

17 And is it not probable, I say, that he will carry it on in the same manner as he has begun? At the first breaking out of this work in this or that place, there may be a shower, a torrent of grace; and so at some other particular seasons, which “the Father has reserved in his own power:” but in general, it seems the kingdom of God will not “come with observation;” but will silently increase, wherever it is set up, and spread from heart to heart, from house to house, from town to town, from one kingdom to another. May it not spread, first, through the remaining provinces; then, through the isles of North America; and, at the same time, from England to Holland, where there is already a blessed work in Utrecht, Haerlem, and many other cities? Probably it will spread from these to the Protestants in France, to those in Germany, and those in Switzerland; then to Sweden, Denmark, Russia, and all the other Protestant nations in Europe.

18. May we not suppose, that the same leaven of pure and undefiled religion, of 'he experimental knowledge and love of God, of inward and outward holiness, will afterwards spread to the Roman Catholics in Great Britain, Ireland, Holland; in Germany, France, Switzerland; and in all other countries where Romanists and Protestants live intermixed and familiarly converse with each other? Will it not then be easy for the wisdom of God to make a way for religion, in the life and power thereof, into those countries that are merely Popish; as Italy, Spain, Portugal? And may it not be gradually diffused from thence to all that name the name of Christ, in the various provinces of Turkey, in Abyssinia, yea, and in the remotest parts, not only of Europe, but of Asia, Africa, and America?

19. And in every nation under heaven, we may reasonably believe, God will observe the same order which he hath done from the beginning of Christianity. "They shall all know me, saith the Lord;" not from the greatest to the least; (this is that wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God;) but, "from the least to the greatest;" that the praise may not be of men, but of God. Before the end even the rich shall enter into the kingdom of God. Together with them will enter in the great, the noble, the honourable; yea, the rulers, the princes, the kings of the earth. Last of all, the wise and learned, the men of genius, the philosophers, will be convinced that they are fools; will be "converted, and become as little children," and "enter into the kingdom of God."

20. Then shall be fully accomplished to the house of Israel, the spiritual Israel, of whatever people or nation, that gracious promise, "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and

their iniquities will I remember no more." Then shall "the times of" universal "refreshment come from the presenee of the Lord." The grand "Pentecost" shall "fully come," and "devout men in every nation under heaven," however distant in place from each other, shall "all be filled with the Holy Ghost;" and they will "continue steadfast in the apostles' doctrine, and in the fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers;" they will "eat their meat," and do all that they have to do, "with gladness and singleness of heart. Great grace will be upon them all;" and they will be "all of one heart and of one soul." The natural, necessary consequence of this will be the same as it was in the beginning of the Christian church: "none of them will say, that aught of the things which he possesses is his own; but they will have all things common. Neither will there be any among them that want: for as many as are possessed of lands or houses will sell them; and distribution will be made to every man, according as he has need." All their desires, meantime, and passions, and tempers, will be cast in one mould; while all are doing the will of God on earth as it is done in heaven. All their "conversation will be seasoned with salt," and will "minister grace to the hearers;" seeing it will not be so much they that speak, "as the Spirit of their Father that speaketh in them." And there will be no "root of bitterness springing up" either to defile or trouble them: there will be no Ananias or Sapphira, to bring back the cursed love of money among them: there will be no partiality; no "widows neglected in the daily ministration:" consequently, there will be no temptation to any murmuring thought, or unkind word, of one against another; while,

"They all are of one heart and soul,
And only love informs the whole."

21. The grand stumbling-block being thus happily removed out of the way, namely, the lives of the Christians, the Mohammedans will look upon them with other eyes, and begin to give attention to their

words. And as their words will be clothed with divine energy, attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power, those of them that fear God will soon take knowledge of the Spirit whereby the Christians speak. They will "receive with meekness the engrafted word," and will bring forth fruit with patience. From them the leaven will soon spread to those who, till then, had no fear of God before their eyes. Observing the *Christian dogs*, as they used to term them, to have changed their nature; to be sober, temperate, just, benevolent; and that, in spite of all provocations to the contrary; from admiring their lives, they will surely be led to consider and embrace their doctrine. And then the Saviour of sinners will say, "The hour is come; I will glorify my Father: I will seek and save the sheep that were wandering on the dark mountains. Now will I avenge myself of my enemy, and pluck the prey out of the lion's teeth. I will resume my own, for ages lost: I will elaim the purchase of my blood." So he will go forth in the greatness of his strength, and all his enemies shall flee before him. All the prophets of lies shall vanish away, and all the nations that had followed them shall acknowledge the great prophet of the Lord, "mighty in word and deed;" and "shall honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

22. And then, the grand stumbling-block being removed from the heathen nations also, the same Spirit will be poured out upon them; even those that remain in the uttermost parts of the sea. The poor American savage will no more ask, "What are the Christians better than us?"—when they see their steady practice of universal temperance, and of justice, mercy, and truth. The Malabarian heathen will have no more room to say, "Christian man take my wife: Christian man much drunk: Christian man kill man! *Devil-Christian!* me no Christian." Rather, seeing how far the Christians exceed their own countrymen in whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, they will adopt a very different language, and say, *Angel-Christian!*

The holy lives of the Christians will be an argument they will not know how to resist; seeing the Christians steadily and uniformly practise what is agreeable to the law written in their own hearts, their prejudices will quickly die away, and they will gladly receive "the truth as it is in Jesus."

23. We may reasonably believe, that the heathen nations which are mingled with the Christians, and those that, bordering upon Christian nations, have constant and familiar intercourse with them, will be some of the first who learn to worship God in spirit and in truth; those, for instance, that live on the continent of America, or in the islands that have received colonies from Europe. Such are likewise all those inhabitants of the East Indies that adjoin to any of the Christian settlements. To these may be added, numerous tribes of Tartars, the heathen parts of the Russias, and the inhabitants of Norway, Finland, and Lapland. Probably these will be followed by those more distant nations with whom the Christians trade; to whom they will impart what is of infinitely more value than earthly pearls, or gold and silver. The God of love will then prepare his messengers, and make a way into the polar regions; into the deepest recesses of America, and into the interior parts of Africa; yea, into the heart of China and Japan, with the countries adjoining them. And "their sound" will then "go forth into all lands, and their voice to the ends of the earth!"

24. But one considerable difficulty still remains: there are very many heathen nations in the world that have no intercourse, either by trade or any other means, with Christians of any kind. Such are the inhabitants of the numerous islands in the South Sea, and probably in all large branches of the ocean. Now, what shall be done for these poor outcasts of men? "How shall they believe," saith the apostle, "in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" You may add, "And how shall they preach, unless they be sent?" Yea, but is not God able to send

them? Cannot he raise them up, as it were, out of the stones? And can he ever want means of sending them? No: were there no other means, he can "take them by his Spirit," as he did Ezekiel, (iii. 12,) or by his angel, as he did Philip, (Acts viii.) and set them down where-soever it pleaseth him. Yea, he can find out a thousand ways to foolish man unknown. And he surely will: for heaven and earth may pass away; but his word shall not pass away: he will give his Son "the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."

25. And so all Israel too shall be saved. For "blindness has happened to Israel," as the great apostle observes, (Rom. xi. 25, &c.,) till the fulness of the "Gentiles be come in." Then the "Deliverer that cometh out of Zion shall turn away iniquity from Jacob." "God hath now concluded them all in unbelief, that he may have mercy upon all." Yea, and he will so have mercy upon all Israel, as to give them all temporal with all spiritual blessings. For this is the promise: "For the Lord thy God will gather thee from all nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it. And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul." (Deut. xxx. 3, &c.) Again: "I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them: and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever. I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. And I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart and with my whole soul." (Jer. xxxii. 37, &c.) Yet again: "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And ye shall dwell

in the land that I gave to your fathers ; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." (Ezek. xxxvi. 24, &c.)

26. At that time will be accomplished all those glorious promises made to the Christian church, which will not then be confined to this or that nation, but will include all the inhabitants of the earth. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." (Isa. xi. 9.) "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders ; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise." Thou shalt be encompassed on every side with salvation, and all that go through thy gates shall praise God. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee : but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." The light of the sun and moon shall be swallowed up in the light of His countenance, shining upon thee. "Thy people also shall be all righteous, ———the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." "As the earth bringeth forth her bud, and the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth ; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isaiah lx. 18, &c.; and lxi. 11.)

27 This I apprehend to be the answer, yea, the only full and satisfactory answer that can be given, to the objection against the wisdom and goodness of God, taken from the present state of the world. It will not always be thus : these things are only permitted for a season by the great Governor of the world, that he may draw immense, eternal good out of this temporary evil. This is the very key which the apostle himself gives us in the words above recited : "God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." In view of this glorious event, how well may we cry out, "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !" although for a season "his judgments were unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." (Rom.

xi. 32, 33.) It is enough, that we are assured of this one point, that all these transient evils will issue well; will have a happy conclusion; and that "mercy first and last will reign." All unprejudiced persons may see with their eyes, that He is already renewing the face of the earth: and we have strong reason to hope that the work he hath begun, he will carry on unto the day of the Lord Jesus; that he will never intermit this blessed work of his Spirit, until he has fulfilled all his promises, until he hath put a period to sin, and misery, and infirmity, and death, and re-established universal holiness and happiness, and caused all the inhabitants of the earth to sing together, "Hallelujah, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever!" (Rev. vii. 12.)

SERMON LXIV.

THE NEW CREATION.

“Behold, I make all things new.”—REV. xxi. 5.

1. WHAT a strange scene is here opened to our view! How remote from all our natural apprehensions! Not a glimpse of what is here revealed was ever seen in the heathen world. Not only the modern, barbarous, uncivilized heathens have not the least conception of it; but it was equally unknown to the refined, polished heathens of ancient Greece and Rome. And it is almost as little thought of or understood by the generality of Christians: I mean not barely those that are nominally such; that have the form of godliness without the power; but even those that in a measure fear God, and study to work righteousness.

2. It must be allowed, that after all the researches we can make, still our knowledge of the great truth which is delivered to us in these words is exceedingly short and imperfect. As this is a point of mere revelation, beyond the reach of all our natural faculties, we cannot penetrate far into it, nor form any adequate conception of it. But it may be an encouragement to those who have, in any degree, tasted of the powers of the world to come, to go as far as they can go; interpreting scripture by scripture, according to the analogy of faith.

3. The apostle, caught up in the visions of God, tells us, in the first verse of the chapter, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth;” and adds, (verse 5,) “He that sat upon the throne said,” (I believe the only words

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which he is said to utter throughout the whole book,) "Behold, I make all things new."

4. Very many commentators entertain a strange opinion, that this relates only to the present state of things; and gravely tell us, that the words are to be referred to the flourishing state of the church which commenced after the heathen persecutions. Nay, some of them have discovered, that all which the apostle speaks concerning the "new heaven and the new earth" was fulfilled when Constantine the Great poured in riches and honours upon the Christians. What a miserable way is this of making void the whole counsel of God, with regard to all that grand chain of events, in reference to his church, yea, and to all mankind, from the time that John was in Patmos, unto the end of the world! Nay, the line of this prophecy reaches farther still: it does not end with the present world, but shows us the things that will come to pass, when this world is no more. For,

5. Thus saith the Creator and Governor of the universe: "Behold, I make all things new;"—all which are included in that expression of the apostle, "a new heaven and a new earth." *A new heaven*: the original word in Genesis (chap. i.) is in the plural number; and, indeed, this is the constant language of Scripture; not *heaven*, but *heavens*. Accordingly, the ancient Jewish writers are accustomed to reckon three heavens; in conformity to which, the apostle Paul speaks of his being caught "up into the third heaven." It is this, the third heaven, which is usually supposed to be the more immediate residence of God; so far as any residence can be ascribed to his omnipresent Spirit, who pervades and fills the whole universe. It is here (if we speak after the manner of men) that the Lord sitteth upon his throne, surrounded by angels and archangels, and by all his flaming ministers.

6. We cannot think that this heaven will undergo any change, any more than its Great Inhabitant. Surely this palace of the Most High was the same from eternity.

and will be, world without end? Only the inferior heavens are liable to change; the highest of which we usually call the starry heavens. This, St. Peter informs us, "is reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men." In that day, "being on fire," it shall, first, "shrivel as a parchment scroll;" then it "shall be dissolved, and shall pass away with a great noise;" lastly, it shall "flee from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and there shall be found no place for it."

7 At the same time "the stars shall fall from heaven;" the secret chain being broken which had retained them in their several orbits from the foundation of the world. In the mean while, the lower or sublunary heaven, with the elements, (or principles that compose it,) "shall melt with fervent heat;" while "the earth, with the works that are therein, shall be burned up." This is the introduction to a far nobler state of things, such as it has not yet entered into the heart of men to conceive,—the universal restoration, which is to succeed the universal destruction. For "we look," says the apostle, "for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter iii. 7, &c.)

8. One considerable difference there will undoubtedly be in the starry heaven, when it is created anew: there will be no blazing stars, no comets there. Whether those horrid, eccentric orbs are half-formed planets, in a chaotic state; (I speak on the supposition of a plurality of worlds;) or such as have undergone their general conflagration; they will certainly have no place in the new heaven, where all will be exact order and harmony. There may be many other differences between the heaven that now is, and that which will be after the renovation: but they are above our apprehension: we must leave eternity to explain them.

9. We may more easily conceive the changes which will be wrought in the lower heaven, in the region of the air. It will be no more torn by hurricanes, or agitated

by furious storms or destructive tempests. Pernicious or terrifying meteors will have no place therein. We shall have no more occasion to say,

“There, like a trumpet, loud and strong,
Thy thunder shakes our coast;
While the red lightnings wave along,
The banners of thy host!”

No: all will then be light, fair, serene; a lively picture of the eternal day.

10. All the elements (taking that word in the common sense, for the principles of which all natural beings are compounded) will be new indeed; entirely changed as to their qualities, although not as to their nature. Fire is, at present, the general destroyer of all things under the sun; dissolving all things that come within the sphere of its action, and reducing them to their primitive atoms. But no sooner will it have performed its last great office of destroying the heavens and the earth; (whether you mean thereby one system only, or the whole fabric of the universe; the difference between one and millions of worlds being nothing before the great Creator;) when, I say, it has done this, the destructions wrought by fire will come to a perpetual end. It will destroy no more: it will consume no more: it will forget its power to burn,—which it possesses only during the present state of things,—and be as harmless in the new heavens and earth as it is now in the bodies of men and other animals, and the substance of trees and flowers, in all which (as late experiments show) large quantities of ethereal fire are lodged; if it be not rather an essential component part of every material being under the sun. But it will probably retain its vivifying power, though divested of its power to destroy.

11. It has been already observed, that the calm, placid air will be no more disturbed by storms and tempests. There will be no more meteors, with their horrid glare, affrighting the poor children of men. May we not add, (though at first it may sound like a paradox,) that there will be no more rain? It is observable that

there was none in paradise; a circumstance which Moses particularly mentions: (Gen. ii. 5, 6 :) "The Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth. But there went up a mist from the earth," which then covered up the abyss of waters, "and watered the whole face of the ground," with moisture sufficient for all the purposes of vegetation. We have all reason to believe that the case will be the same when paradise is restored. Consequently, there will be no clouds or fogs; but one bright, refulgent day. Much less will there be any poisonous damps, or pestilential blasts. There will be no sirocco in Italy; no parching or suffocating winds in Arabia; no keen north-east wind in our own country,

"Shattering the graceful locks of yon fair trees;"

but only pleasing, healthful breezes,

"Fanning the earth with odoriferous wings."

12. But what a change will the element of water undergo, when all things are made new! It will be, in every part of the world, clear and limpid; pure from all unpleasing or unhealthful mixtures; rising here and there in crystal fountains, to refresh and adorn the earth "with liquid lapse of murmuring stream." For, undoubtedly, as there were in paradise, there will be various rivers gently gliding along, for the use and pleasure of both man and beast. But the inspired writer has expressly declared, "there will be no more sea." (Rev. xxi. 1.) We have reason to believe, that at the beginning of the world, when God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear," (Gen. i. 9,) the dry land spread over the face of the water, and covered it on every side. And so it seems to have done, till, in order to the general deluge which God had determined to bring upon the earth at once, "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep broken up." But the sea will then retire within its primitive bounds, and appear on the surface of the earth no more. Neither
?

indeed, will there be any more need of the sea. For either, as the ancient poet supposes,

Omnis feret omnia tellus,

—every part of the earth will naturally produce whatever its inhabitants want,—or all mankind will procure what the whole earth affords, by a much easier and readier conveyance. For all the inhabitants of the earth, our Lord informs us, will then be *ισαγγελοι*,—*equal to angels*; on a level with them in swiftness, as well as strength; so that they can, quick as thought, transport themselves, or whatever they want, from one side of the globe to the other.

13. But it seems, a greater change will be wrought in the earth than even in the air and water. Not that I can believe that wonderful discovery of Jacob Behme, which many so eagerly contend for; that the earth itself, with all its furniture and inhabitants, will then be transparent as glass. There does not seem to be the least foundation for this, either in Scripture or reason. Surely not in Scripture: I know not one text in the Old or New Testament which affirms any such thing. Certainly it cannot be inferred from that text in the Revelation: (iv. 6:) “And before the throne there was a sea of glass, like unto crystal.” And yet, if I mistake not, this is the chief, if not the only scripture which has been urged in favour of this opinion! Neither can I conceive that it has any foundation in reason. It has been warmly alleged, that all things would be far more beautiful if they were quite transparent. But I cannot apprehend this: yea, I apprehend quite the contrary. Suppose every part of a human body were made transparent as crystal, would it appear more beautiful than it does now? Nay, rather, it would shock us above measure. The surface of the body, in particular “the human face divine,” is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful objects that can be found under heaven; but could you look through the rosy cheek, the smooth, fair forehead, or the rising bosom, and distinctly

see all that lies within, you would turn away from it with loathing and horror!

14. Let us next take a view of those changes which we may reasonably suppose will then take place in the earth. It will no more be bound up with intense cold, nor parched up with extreme heat, but will have such a temperature as will be most conducive to its fruitfulness. If, in order to punish its inhabitants, God did of old

“Bid his angels turn askance
This oblique globe,”

thereby occasioning violent cold on one part, and violent heat on the other; he will undoubtedly, then order them to restore it to its original position: so that there will be a final end, on the one hand, of the burning heat which makes some parts of it scarce habitable; and, on the other, of

“The rage of Arctos and eternal frost.”

15. And it will then contain no jarring or destructive principles within its own bosom. It will no more have any of those violent convulsions in its own bowels. It will no more be shaken or torn asunder by the impetuous force of earthquakes, and will, therefore, need neither Vesuvius, nor Etna, nor any burning mountains to prevent them. There will be no more horrid rocks, or frightful precipices; no wild deserts, or barren sands; no impassable morasses, or unfaithful bogs, to swallow up the unwary traveller. There will, doubtless, be inequalities on the surface of the earth; which are not blemishes, but beauties. For though I will not affirm, that

“Earth hath this variety from heaven,
Of pleasure situate in hill and dale;”

yet I cannot think gently-rising hills will be any defect, but an ornament of the new-made earth. And doubtless we shall then likewise have occasion to say,—

“Lo, there his wondrous skill arrays
The fields in cheerful green!
A thousand herbs his hand displays,
A thousand flowers between!”

16. And what will the general produce of the earth be? Not thorns, briars, or thistles; not any useless or fetid weed; not any poisonous, hurtful, or unpleasant plant; but every one that can be conducive, in anywise, either to our use or pleasure. How far beyond all that the most lively imagination is now able to conceive! We shall no more regret the loss of the terrestrial paradise, or sigh at that well-devised description of our great poet:—

“Then shall this mount
Of paradise, by might of waves, be move;
Out of his place, push'd by the horned flood,
With all its verdure spoil'd and trees adrift,
Down the great river to the opening gulf,
And there take root, an island salt and bare!”

For all the earth shall be a more beautiful paradise than Adam ever saw.

17. Such will be the state of the new earth with regard to the meaner, the inanimate, parts of it. But great as this change will be, it is nothing in comparison of that which will then take place throughout all animated nature. In the living part of the creation were seen the most deplorable effects of Adam's apostasy. The whole animated creation, whatever has life, from leviathan to the smallest mite, was thereby made subject to such vanity as the inanimate creatures could not be. They were subject to that fell monster, DEATH, the conqueror of all that breathe. They were made subject to its forerunner, pain, in its ten thousand forms; although “God made not death, neither hath he pleasure in the death of any living.” How many millions of creatures in the sea, in the air, and on every part of the earth, can now no otherwise preserve their lives, than by taking away the lives of others; by tearing in pieces and devouring their poor, innocent, unresisting fellow-creatures! Miserable lot of such innumerable multitudes, who, insignificant as they seem, are the offspring of one common Father; the creatures of the same God of love. It is probable, not only two-thirds of the animal creation, but ninety-nine parts of a hundred, are

under a necessity of destroying others in order to preserve their own life! But it shall not be always so. He that sitteth upon the throne will soon change the face of all things, and give a demonstrative proof to all his creatures that "his mercy is over all his works." The horrid state of things which at present obtains will soon be at an end. On the new earth, no creature will kill, or hurt, or give pain to any other. The scorpion will have no poisonous sting; the adder no venomous teeth. The lion will have no claws to tear the lamb; no teeth to grind his flesh and bones. Nay, no creature, no beast, bird, or fish, will have any inclination to hurt any other; for cruelty will be far away, and savageness and fierceness be forgotten. So that violence shall be heard no more, neither wasting or destruction seen on the face of the earth. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb," (the words may be literally as well as figuratively understood,) "and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: they shall not hurt nor destroy," from the rising up of the sun, to the going down of the same.

18. But the most glorious of all will be the change which then will take place on the poor, sinful, miserable children of men. These had fallen in many respects, as from a greater height, so into a lower depth, than any other part of the creation. But they shall "hear a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men: and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be their God." (Rev. xxi. 3, 4.) Hence will arise an unmixed state of holiness and happiness, far superior to that which Adam enjoyed in paradise. In how beautiful a manner is this described by the apostle: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away!" As there will be no more death, and no more pain or sickness preparatory thereto; as there will be no more grieving for, or parting with, friends; so

there will be no more sorrow or crying. Nay, but there will be a greater deliverance than all this; for there will be no more sin. And, to crown all, there will be a deep, an intimate, an uninterrupted union with God; a constant communion with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through the Spirit; a continual enjoyment of the Three-one God, and of all the creatures in him!

SERMON LXV.

THE DUTY OF REPROVING OUR NEIGHBOUR.

"Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."—
LEV. xix. 17.

A GREAT part of the book of Exodus, and almost the whole of the book of Leviticus, relate to the ritual or ceremonial law of Moses; which was peculiarly given to the children of Israel, but was such "a yoke," says the apostle Peter, "as neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." We are, therefore, delivered from it; and this is one branch of "the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free." Yet it is easy to observe, that many excellent moral precepts are interspersed among these ceremonial laws. Several of them we find in this very chapter: such as, "Thou shalt not gather every grape in thy vineyard: thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger. I am the Lord your God." (Verse 10.) "Ye shall not steal, neither lie one to another." (Verse 11.) "Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee till the morning." (Verse 13.) "Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind; but shalt fear thy God; I am the Lord:" (verse 14:) as if he had said, I am He whose eyes are over all the earth, and whose ears are open to their cry. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor," which compassionate men may be tempted to do; "nor honour the person of the mighty," to which there are a thousand temptations. (Verse 15.) "Thou shalt not go up and down

as a talebearer among thy people:" (verse 16:) although this is a sin which human laws have never yet been able to prevent. Then follows, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him."

In order to understand this important direction aright, and to apply it profitably to our own souls, let us consider,

I. What it is that we are to rebuke or reprove? What is the thing that is here enjoined?

II. Who are they whom we are commanded to reprove? And,

III. How are we to reprove them?

I. 1. Let us consider, first, What is the duty that is here enjoined? What is it we are to rebuke or reprove? And what is it to reprove? To tell any one of his faults; as clearly appears from the following words: "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon him." Sin is therefore the thing we are called to reprove, or rather him that commits sin. We are to do all that in us lies to convince him of his fault, and lead him into the right way.

2. Love indeed requires us to warn him, not only of sin, (although of this chiefly,) but likewise of any error which, if it were persisted in, would naturally lead to sin. If we do not "hate him in our heart," if we love our neighbour as ourselves, this will be our constant endeavour; to warn him of every evil way, and of every mistake which tends to evil.

3. But if we desire not to lose our labour, we should rarely reprove any one for any thing that is of a disputable nature, that will bear much to be said on both sides. A thing may possibly appear evil to me; therefore I scruple the doing of it; and if I were to do it while that scruple remains, I should be a sinner before God. But another is not to be judged by my conscience: to his own master he standeth or falleth. Therefore I would not reprove him, but for what is clearly and undeniably evil. Such, for instance, is profane cursing and swearing; which even those who

practise it most will not often venture to defend, if one mildly expostulates with them. Such is drunkenness; which even an habitual drunkard will condemn when he is sober. And such, in the account of the generality of people, is the profaning of the Lord's day. And if any who are guilty of these sins for a while attempt to defend them, very few will persist to do it, if you look them steadily in the face, and appeal to their own conscience in the sight of God.

II. 1. Let us, in the second place, consider, Who are those that we are called to reprove? It is the more needful to consider this, because it is affirmed by many serious persons, that there are some sinners whom the Scripture itself forbids us to reprove. This sense has been put on that solemn caution of our Lord, in his sermon on the Mount: "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, and turn again and rend you." But the plain meaning of these words is, Do not offer the pearls, the sublime doctrines or mysteries of the gospel, to those whom you know to be brutish men, immersed in sins, and having no fear of God before their eyes. This would expose those precious jewels to contempt, and yourselves to injurious treatment. But even those whom we know to be, in our Lord's sense, dogs and swine, if we saw them do, or heard them speak, what they themselves know to be evil, we ought in anywise to reprove them; else we "hate our brother in our heart."

2. The persons intended by our "neighbour" are, every child of man; every one that breathes the vital air; all that have souls to be saved. And if we refrain from performing this office of love to any, because they are sinners above other men, they may persist in their iniquity, but their blood will God require at our hands.

3. How striking is Mr. Baxter's reflection on this head, in his "Saints' Everlasting Rest!" "Suppose thou wert to meet one in the lower world, to whom thou hadst denied this office of love, when ye were both together under the sun; what answer couldest thou

make to his upbraiding? 'At such a time and place, while we were under the sun, God delivered me into thy hands: I then did not know the way of salvation, but was seeking death in the error of my life; and therein thou sufferedst me to remain, without once endeavouring to awake me out of sleep! Hadst thou imparted to me thy knowledge, and warned me to flee from the wrath to come, neither I nor thou need ever to have come into this place of torment.'"

4. Every one, therefore, who has a soul to be saved, is entitled to this good office from thee. Yct this does not imply, that it is to be done in the same degree to every one. It cannot be denied, that there are some to whom it is particularly due. Such, in the first place, are our parents, if we have any that stand in need of it: unless we should place our consorts and our children on an equal footing with them. Next to these we may rank our brothers and sisters, and afterwards our relations, as they are allied to us in a nearer or more distant manner, either by blood or by marriage. Immediately after these are our servants, whether bound to us for a term of years, or any shorter term. Lastly, such, in their several degrees, are our countrymen, our fellow-citizens, and the members of the same society, whether civil or religious: the latter have a particular claim to our service; seeing these societies are formed with that very design,—to watch over each other for this very end, that we may not suffer sin upon our brother. If we neglect to reprove any of these, when a fair opportunity offers, we are undoubtedly to be ranked among those that "hate their brother in their heart." And how severe is the sentence of the apostle against those who fall under this condemnation! "He that hateth his brother," though it does not break out into words or actions, "is a murderer:" "And ye know," continues the apostle, "that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." He hath not that seed planted in his soul, which groweth up unto everlasting life: in other words, he is in such a state, that, if he dies therein,

he cannot see life. It plainly follows, that to neglect this is no small thing, but eminently endangers our final salvation.

III. We have seen what is meant by reproving our brother, and who those are that we should reprove. But the principal thing remains to be considered: How, in what manner, are we to reprove them?

1. It must be allowed, that there is a considerable difficulty in performing this in a right manner: although, at the same time, it is far less difficult to some than it is to others. Some there are who are particularly qualified for it, whether by nature, or practice, or grace. They are not encumbered either with evil shame, or that sore burden, the fear of man: they are both ready to undertake this labour of love, and skilful in performing it. To these, therefore, it is little or no cross; nay, they have a kind of relish for it, and a satisfaction therein, over and above that which arises from a consciousness of having done their duty. But be it a cross to us, greater or less, we know that hereunto we are called. And be the difficulty ever so great to us, we know in whom we have trusted; and that he will surely fulfil his word, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be."

2. In what manner, then, shall we reprove our brother, in order that our reproof may be most effectual? Let us first of all take care that whatever we do may be done in "the spirit of *love*;" in the spirit of tender good-will to our neighbour; as for one who is the son of our common Father, and one for whom Christ died, that he might be a partaker of salvation. Then, by the grace of God, love will beget love. The affection of the speaker will spread to the heart of the hearer; and you will find, in due time, that your labour hath not been in vain in the Lord.

3. Meantime, the greatest care must be taken that you speak in the spirit of *humility*. Beware that you do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. If you think too highly of yourself, you can

scarcely avoid despising your brother. And if you show, or even feel, the least contempt of those whom you reprove, it will blast your whole work, and occasion you to lose all your labour. In order to prevent the very appearance of pride, it will be often needful to be explicit on the head; to disclaim all preferring yourself before him; and, at the very time you reprove that which is evil, to own and bless God for that which is good in him.

4. Great care must be taken, in the third place, to speak in the spirit of *meekness*, as well as lowliness. The apostle assures us that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Anger, though it be adorned with the name of zeal, begets anger; not love or holiness. We should therefore avoid, with all possible care, the very appearance of it. Let there be no trace of it, either in the eyes, the gesture, or the tone of voice: but let these concur in manifesting a loving, humble, and dispassionate spirit.

5. But all this time, see that you do not trust in yourself. Put no confidence in your own wisdom, or address, or abilities of any kind. For the success of all you speak or do, trust not in yourself, but in the great Author of every good and perfect gift. Therefore, while you are speaking, continually lift up your heart to Him that worketh all in all. And whatsoever is spoken in the spirit of *prayer*, will not fall to the ground.

6. So much for the *spirit* wherewith you should speak when you reprove your neighbour. I now proceed to the *outward* manner. It has been frequently found that the prefaceing a reproof with a frank profession of goodwill has caused what was spoken to sink deep into the heart. This will generally have a far better effect, than that grand fashionable engine,—flattery, by means of which the men of the world have often done surprising things. But the very same things, yea, far greater, have much oftener been effected by a plain and artless declaration of disinterested love. When you feel God has kindled this flame in your heart, hide it not: give it full vent! It will pierce like lightning. The stout.

the hard-hearted, will melt before you, and know that God is with you of a truth.

7. Although it is certain that the main point in reproving is, to do it with a right spirit, yet it must also be allowed, there are several little circumstances with regard to the outward manner, which are by no means without their use, and therefore are not to be despised. One of these is, whenever you reprove, do it with great *seriousness*, so that as you really are in earnest, you may likewise appear so to be. A ludicrous reproof makes little impression, and is soon forgot; besides, that many times it is taken ill, as if you ridiculed the person you reprove. And indeed those who are not accustomed to make jests, do not take it well to be jested upon. One means of giving a serious air to what you speak, is, as often as may be, to use the very words of Scripture. Frequently we find the word of God, even in a private conversation, has a peculiar energy; and the sinner, when he expects it least, feels it "sharper than a two-edged sword."

8. Yet there are some exceptions to this general rule of reproving seriously. There are some exempt cases, wherein, as a good judge of human nature observes,

Ridiculum acri fortius ;—

a little well-placed raillery will pierce deeper than solid argument. But this has place chiefly when we have to do with those who are strangers to religion. And when we condescend to give a ludicrous reproof to a person of this character, it seems we are authorized so to do, by that advice of Solomon, "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes."

9. The manner of the reproof may, in other respects too, be varied according to the occasion. Sometimes you may find it proper to use many words, to express your sense at large. At other times, you may judge it more expedient to use few words, perhaps a single sentence; and at others, it may be advisable to use no words at all, but a gesture, a sigh, or a look, particu-

larly when the person you would reprove is greatly your superior. And frequently, this silent kind of reproof will be attended by the power of God, and, consequently, have a far better effect than a long and laboured discourse.

10. Once more : remember the remark of Solomon, "A word spoken in season, how good is it !" It is true, if you are providentially called to reprove any one whom you are not likely to see any more, you are to snatch the present opportunity, and to "speak in season," or "out of season;" but with them whom you have frequent opportunities of seeing, you may wait for a fair occasion. Here the advice of the poet has place. You may speak

Si validus, si lætus erit, si denique poscit :

when he is in a good humour, or when he asks it you : Here you may catch the

Mollia tempora fandi,—

time when his mind is in a soft, mild frame : and then God will both teach you how to speak, and give a blessing to what is spoken.

11. But here let me guard you against one mistake. It passes for an indisputable maxim, "Never attempt to reprove a man when he is intoxicated with drink." Reproof, it is said, is then thrown away, and can have no good effect. I dare not say so. I have seen not a few clear instances of the contrary. Take one : Many years ago, passing by a man in Moorfields, who was so drunk he could hardly stand, I put a paper into his hand. He looked at it, and said, "A Word—A Word to a Drunkard,—that is me, sir, sir ! I am wrong, I know I am wrong,—pray let me talk a little with you." He held me by the hand a full half-hour : and I believe he got drunk no more.

12. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, do not despise poor drunkards ! Have compassion on them ! Be instant with them in season and out of season ! Let not shame, or fear of men, prevent your pull-

ing these brands out of the burning. Many of them are self-condemned :

“Nor do they not discern the evil plight
That they are in;”

but they despair ; they have no hope of escaping out of it : and they sink into it still deeper, because none else has any hope for them ! “Sinners of every other sort,” said a venerable old clergyman, “have I frequently known converted to God. But an habitual drunkard I have never known converted.” But I have known five hundred, perhaps five thousand. Ho ! Art thou one, who readest these words ? Then hear thou the words of the Lord ! I have a message from God unto thee, O sinner ! Thus saith the Lord, Cast not away thy hope. I have not forgotten thee. He that tells thee there is no help is a liar from the beginning ! Look up ! Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world ! This day is salvation come to thy soul : only see that thou despise not him that speaketh ! Just now he saith unto thee, “Son, be of good cheer ! Thy sins are forgiven thee !”

13. Lastly : you that are diligent in this labour of love, see that you be not discouraged, although, after you have used your best endeavours, you should see no present fruit. You have need of patience ; and then, “after ye have done the will of God” herein, the harvest will come. Never be “weary of well-doing ; in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.” Copy after Abraham, who “against hope still believed in hope.” “Cast thy bread upon the waters ; for thou shalt find it after many days.”

14. I have now only a few words to add unto you, my brethren, who are vulgarly called Methodists. I never heard or read of any considerable revival of religion which was not attended with a spirit of reproving. I believe it cannot be otherwise ; for what is faith, unless it worketh by love ? Thus it was in every part of England when the present revival of religion began,

about fifty years ago : all the subjects of that revival,—all the Methodists, so called, in every place, were reprovers of outward sin. And, indeed, so are all that, “being justified by faith, have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Such they are at first ; and if they use that precious gift, it will never be taken away. Come, brethren, in the name of God, let us begin again ! Rich or poor, let us all arise as one man ; and in anywise let every man “rebuke his neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him !” Then shall all Great Britain and Ireland know that we do not “go a warfare at our own cost :” yea, “God shall bless us, and all the ends of the world shall fear him.”

SERMON LXVI.

THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

“Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”—MATT. xvi. 3.

1. THE entire passage runs thus: “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven. He answered and said, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?”

2. “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came:” in general, these were quite opposite to each other; but it is no uncommon thing for the children of the world to lay aside their opposition to each other, (at least for a season,) and cordially to unite in opposing the children of God. “And tempting,” that is, making a trial whether he was indeed sent of God, “desired him that he would show them a sign from heaven;” which they believed no false prophet was able to do. It is not improbable, they imagined this would convince them that he was really sent from God. “He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering.” Probably there were more certain signs of fair and foul weather in their climate than there are in ours. “O ye hypocrites,”—making profession of love, while you have enmity in your hearts,—“ye can discern

the face of the sky," and judge thereby what the weather will be; "but can ye not discern the signs of the times," when God brings his first-begotten Son into the world?

3. Let us more particularly inquire, first, What were the times whereof our Lord here speaks; and what were the signs whereby those times were to be distinguished from all others? We may then inquire, secondly, what are the times which we have reason to believe are *now* at hand; and how is it that all who are called Christians do not discern the signs of *these* times?

I. 1. Let us, in the first place, inquire, What times were those concerning which our Lord is here speaking? It is easy to answer: The times of the Messiah; the times ordained before the foundation of the world, wherein it pleased God to give his only-begotten Son, to take our nature upon him, to be "found in fashion as a man," to live a life of sorrow and pain, and at length to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," to the end that "whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This was the important time, the signs whereof the Pharisees and Sadducees could not discern. Clear as they were in themselves, yet so thick a veil was upon the heart of these men that they did not discern the tokens of this coming, foretold so long before.

2. But what were those signs of the coming of that Just One which had been so long and so clearly foretold, and whereby they might easily have discerned those times, had not the veil been on their heart? They are many in number; but it may suffice to mention a few of them. One of the first is that pointed out in the solemn words spoken by Jacob a little before his death: (Gen. xlix. 10 :) "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." All, both ancient and modern Jews, agree, that by Shiloh we are to understand the Messiah; who *was*, therefore, to come, according to the prophecy, "before the sceptre," that is, the sovereignty, "departed from

Judah." But it did, without controversy, depart from Judah at this very time;—an infallible sign that at this very time, Shiloh, that is, the Messiah, came.

3. A second eminent sign of those times, the times of the coming of the Messiah, is given us in the third chapter of the prophecy of Malachi: "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare my way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple." (Verse 1.) How manifestly was this fulfilled, first, by the coming of John the Baptist; and then by our blessed Lord himself "coming suddenly to his temple!" And what sign could be clearer to those that impartially considered the words of the prophet Isaiah: (xl. 3 :) "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight!"

4. But yet clearer signs than these (if any could be clearer) were the mighty works that he wrought. Accordingly, he himself declares, "The works which I do, they testify of me." And to these he explicitly appeals in his answer to the question of John the Baptist: (not proposed, as some have strangely imagined, from any doubt which he had himself, but from a desire of confirming his disciples, who might possibly waver when their Master was taken from their head :) "Art thou he that should come," the Messiah, "or look we for another?" No bare verbal answer could have been so convincing as what they saw with their own eyes. Jesus therefore referred them to this testimony: "He answered and said unto them, Go, and show John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." (Matt. xi. 4, 5.)

5. But how then came it to pass that those who were so sharp-sighted in other things, who could "discern the face of the sky," were not able to discern those signs which indicated the coming of the Messiah? They could not discern them, not for want of evidence,—this was

full and clear,—but for want of integrity in themselves; because they were a “wicked and adulterous generation;” because the perverseness of their hearts spread a cloud over their understanding. Therefore, although the Sun of Righteousness shone bright, yet they were insensible of it. They were not willing to be convinced: therefore they remained in ignorance. The light was sufficient; but they shut their eyes that they might not see it: so that they were without excuse, till vengeance came upon them to the uttermost.

II. 1. We are, in the second place, to consider what are the times which we have reason to believe are *now* at hand. And how is it that all who are called Christians do not discern the signs of *these* times?

The times which we have reason to believe are at hand (if they are not already begun) are what many pious men have termed the time of “the latter-day glory;” meaning the time wherein God would gloriously display his power and love in the fulfilment of his gracious promise, that “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.”

2. “But are there in England, or in any part of the world, any *signs* of such a time approaching?” It is not many years since, that a person of considerable learning, as well as eminence in the church, (then Bishop of London,) in his Pastoral Letter, made this observation:—“I cannot imagine what persons mean, by talking of a *great work of God* at this time. I do not see any work of God now, more than has been at any other time.” I believe it: I believe that great man did not see any extraordinary work of God. Neither he, nor the generality of Christians, so called, saw any signs of the glorious day that is approaching. But how is this to be accounted for? How is it that those who can now “discern the face of the sky,” who are not only great philosophers, but great divines, as eminent as ever the Sadducees, yea, or the Pharisees were, do not discern the signs of those glorious times which, if not begun, are nigh, even at the door?

3. We allow, indeed, that in every age of the church, "the kingdom of God came not with observation;" not with splendour and pomp, or with any of those outward circumstances which usually attend the kingdoms of this world. We allow this "kingdom of God is within us;" and that, consequently, when it begins, either in an individual or in a nation, it "is like a grain of mustard-seed," which at first "is the least of all seeds," but nevertheless gradually increases, till "it becomes a great tree." Or, to use the other comparison of our Lord, it is like "a little leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."

4. But may it not be asked, "Are there now any signs that the day of God's power is approaching?" I appeal to every candid, unprejudiced person, whether we may not, at this day, discern all those signs (understanding the words in a spiritual sense) to which our Lord referred John's disciples? "The blind receive their sight:" those who were blind from their birth, unable to see their own deplorable state, and much more to see God, and the remedy he has prepared for them in the Son of his love, now see themselves, yea, and "the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The eyes of their understanding being now opened, they see all things clearly.—"The deaf hear:" those that were before utterly deaf to all the outward and inward calls of God, now hear, not only his providential calls, but also the whispers of his grace.—"The lame walk:" those who never before arose from the earth, or moved one step toward heaven, are now walking in all the ways of God; yea, running. "the race that is set before them." "The lepers are cleansed:" the deadly leprosy of sin, which they brought with them into the world, and which no art of man could ever cure, is now clean departed from them. And surely never in any age or nation, since the apostles, have those words been so eminently fulfilled, "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," as it is at this day. At this day, the

gospel leaven, faith working by love,—inward and outward holiness,—or (to use the term of St. Paul) “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost,”—hath so spread in various parts of Europe, particularly in England, Scotland, Ireland, in the islands, in the North and South, from Georgia to New England, and Newfoundland, that sinners have been truly converted to God, thoroughly changed both in heart and in life; not by tens, or by hundreds only, but by thousands, yea, by myriads! The fact cannot be denied: we can point out the persons, with their names and places of abode. And yet the wise men of the world, the men of eminence, the men of learning and renown, “cannot imagine what we mean by talking of any extraordinary work of God!” They cannot discern the signs of *these times*! They can see no sign at all of God’s arising to maintain his own cause, and set up his kingdom over the earth!

5. But how may this be accounted for? How is it, that they cannot discern the signs of these times? We may account for their want of discernment on the same principle we accounted for that of the Pharisees and Sadducees; namely, that they likewise are, what those were, an “adulterous and sinful generation.” If their eye was single, their whole body would be full of light: but suppose their eye be evil, their whole body must be full of darkness. Every evil temper darkens the soul; every evil passion clouds the understanding. How then can we expect that those should be able to discern the signs of the times who are full of all disorderly passions, and slaves to every evil temper? But this is really the case. They are full of pride: they think of themselves far more highly than they ought to think. They are vain: they “seek honour one of another, and not the honour that cometh of God only.” They cherish hatred and malice in their hearts: they give place to anger, to envy, to revenge: they return evil for evil, and railing for railing. Instead of overcoming evil with good, they make no scruple of demanding an eye for an eye ~~and a~~

tooth for a tooth. They "savour not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men." They set their affections, not on things above, but on the things that are of the earth. They "love the creature more than the Creator:" they are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." How then should they discern the signs of the times? The god of this world, whom they serve, has blinded their hearts, and covered their minds with a veil of thick darkness. Alas, what have these "souls of flesh and blood" (as one speaks) to do with God, or the things of God?

6. St. John assigns this very reason for the Jews not understanding the things of God; namely, that in consequence of their preceding sins, and wilful rejecting the light, God had now delivered them up to Satan, who had blinded them past recovery. Over and over, when they might have seen, they would not; they shut their eyes against the light: and now they cannot see, God having given them up to an undiscerning mind: therefore they do not believe, because that Isaiah said, (that is, because of the reason given in that saying of Isaiah,) "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, and be converted, and I should heal them." The plain meaning is, not that God did this by his own immediate power; it would be flat blasphemy to say that God, in this sense, hardens any man; but his Spirit strives with them no longer, and then Satan hardens them effectually.

7. And as it was with them in ancient times, so it is with the present generation. Thousands of those who bear the name of Christ are now given up to an undiscerning mind. The god of this world hath so blinded their eyes, that the light cannot shine upon them; so that they can no more discern the signs of the times, than the Pharisees and Sadducees could of old. A wonderful instance of this spiritual blindness, this total inability to discern the signs of the times mentioned in Scripture, is given us in the very celebrated work of a

late eminent writer; who supposes the New Jerusalem came down from heaven when Constantine the Great called himself a Christian. I say, *called himself a Christian*; for I dare not affirm that he *was one*, any more than Peter the Great. I cannot but believe he would have come nearer the mark, if he had said, that was the time when a huge cloud of infernal brimstone and smoke came up from the bottomless pit! For surely there never was a time wherein Satan gained so fatal an advantage over the church of Christ, as when such a flood of riches, and honour, and power, broke in upon it, particularly on the clergy.

8. By the same rule, what signs would this writer have expected of the approaching conversion of the heathens? He would, doubtless, have expected a hero, like Charles of Sweden, or Frederick of Prussia, to carry fire, and sword, and Christianity, through whole nations at once! And it cannot be denied, that, since the time of Constantine, many nations have been converted in this way. But could it be said concerning such conversions as these, "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation?" Surely every one must observe a warrior rushing through the land at the head of fifty or sixty thousand men! But is this the way of spreading Christianity, which the Author of it, the Prince of Peace, has chosen? Nay, it is not in this manner that a grain of mustard-seed grows up into a great tree. It is not thus that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Rather, it spreads by degrees farther and farther, till the whole is leavened. We may form a judgment of what will be hereafter, by what we have seen already. And this is the way wherein true Christian religion, the faith that worketh by love, has been spreading, particularly through Great Britain and its dependencies, for half a century.

9. In the same manner it continues to spread at the present time also, as may easily appear to all those whose eyes are not blinded. All those that experience in their own hearts the power of God unto salvation, will readily perceive how the same religion which they

enjoy is still spreading from heart to heart. They take knowledge of the same grace of God, strongly and sweetly working on every side; and rejoice to find another and another sinner, first inquiring, "What must I do to be saved?"—and then testifying, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour." Upon a fair and candid inquiry, they find more and more, not only of those who had some form of religion, but of those who had no form at all, who were profligate, abandoned sinners, now entirely changed, truly fearing God and working righteousness. They observe more and more, even of these poor outcasts of men, who are inwardly and outwardly changed; loving God and their neighbour; living in the uniform practice of justice, mercy, and truth; as they have time, doing good to all men; easy and happy in their lives, and triumphant in their death.

10. What excuse, then, have any that believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, for not discerning the signs of these times, as preparatory to the general call of the heathens? What could God have done which he hath not done, to convince you that the day is coming, that the time is at hand, when he will fulfil his glorious promises; when he will arise to maintain his own cause, and to set up his kingdom over all the earth? What, indeed, unless he had *forced* you to believe? And this he could not do, without destroying the nature which he had given you: for he made you free agents; having an inward power of self-determination, which is essential to your nature. And he deals with you as free agents from first to last. As such, you may shut or open your eyes as you please. You have sufficient light shining all around you; yet you need not see it unless you will. But be assured, God is not well-pleased with your shutting your eyes, and then saying, "I cannot see." I counsel you to bestow an impartial examination upon the whole affair. After a candid inquiry into matter of fact, consider deeply, "What hath God wrought?" "Who hath seen such a thing? Who

hath heard such a thing?" Hath not "a nation," as it were, been "born in a day?" How swift, as well as how deep and how extensive, a work has been wrought in the present age! And certainly, not by might, neither by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. For how utterly inadequate were the means! how insufficient were the instruments to work any such effect;—at least, those which it has pleased God to make use of in the British dominions and in America! By how unlikely instruments has God been pleased to work from the beginning! "A few young raw heads," said the Bishop of London, "what can they pretend to do?" They pretended to be *that* in the hand of God, that a pen is in the hand of man. They pretended (and do so at this day) to do the work whereunto they are sent; to do just what the Lord pleased. And if it be his pleasure to throw down the walls of Jericho, the strongholds of Satan, not by the engines of war, but by the blast of rams' horns, who shall say unto him, "What doest thou?"

11. Meantime, "blessed are your eyes, for they see; many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." You see and acknowledge the day of your visitation; such a visitation as neither you nor your fathers had known. You may well say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad therein." You see the dawn of that glorious day whereof all the prophets have spoken. And how shall you most effectually improve this day of your visitation?

12. The first point is, see that you yourselves receive not the blessing of God in vain. Begin at the root, if you have not already. Now repent, and believe the gospel! If you have believed, "look to yourselves, that ye lose not what you have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." Stir up the gift of God that is within you. Walk in the light as he is in the light. And while you "hold fast that which you have attained, go on unto perfection." Yea, and when you are "made

perfect in love," still, "forgetting the things that are behind, press on to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

13. It behoves you, in the next place, to help your neighbours. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." As you have time, do good unto all men, but especially unto them that are of the household of faith. Proclaim the glad tidings of salvation ready to be revealed, not only to those of your own household, not only to your relations, friends, and acquaintance, but to all whom God providentially delivers into your hands! "Ye," who already know in whom ye have believed, "are the salt of the earth." Labour to season with the knowledge and love of God all that you have any intercourse with! "Ye are as a city set upon a hill;" ye cannot, ye ought not to be hid. "Ye are the light of the world: men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel;" how much less the all-wise God! No; let it "shine to all that are in the house;" all that are witnesses of your life and conversation. Above all, continue instant in prayer, both for yourselves, for all the church of God, and for all the children of men, that they may remember themselves, and be turned unto our God; that they likewise may enjoy the gospel blessing on earth, and the glory of God in heaven!

SERMON LXVII.

ON DIVINE PROVIDENCE.

“Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”

LUKE xii. 7.

1. THE doctrine of Divine providence has been received by wise men in all ages. It was believed by many of the eminent heathens, not only philosophers, but orators and poets. Innumerable are the testimonies concerning it which are scattered up and down in their writings; agreeable to that well-known saying in Cicero, *Deorum moderamine cuncta geri*: “That all things, all events in this world, are under the management of God.” We might bring a cloud of witnesses to confirm this, were any so hardy as to deny it.

2. The same truth is acknowledged at this day in most parts of the world; yea, even by those nations which are so barbarous as not to know the use of letters. So when Paustobee, an Indian Chief, of the Chicasaw nation in North America, was asked, “Why do you think the Beloved Ones (so they term God) take care of *you*?” he answered, without any hesitation, “I was in the battle with the French; and the bullet went on this side, and the bullet went on that side; and this man died, and that man died; but I am alive still; and by this I know that the Beloved Ones take care of me.”

3. But although the ancient as well as modern heathens had some conception of a Divine providence, yet the conceptions which most of them entertained concerning it were dark, confused and imperfect; yea, the accounts which the most enlightened among them gave were usually contradictory to each other. Add to this, that they were by no means assured of the truth of those very accounts: they hardly dared to affirm any thing,

but spoke with the utmost caution and diffidence : inso-much that what Cicero himself, the author of that noble declaration, ventures to affirm in cool blood, at the end of his long dispute upon the subject, amounts to no more than this lame and impotent conclusion : *Mihi verisimilior videbatur Cottæ oratio* : "What Cotta said" (the person that argued in the defence of the being and providence of God) "*seemed to me more probable* than what his opponent had advanced to the contrary."

4. And it is no wonder : for only God himself can give a clear, consistent, perfect account (that is, as perfect as our weak understanding can receive, in this our infant state of existence ; or, at least, as is consistent with the designs of his government) of his manner of governing the world. And this he hath done in his written word : all the oracles of God, all the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, describe so many scenes of Divine providence. It is the beautiful remark of a fine writer, "Those who object to the Old Testament in particular, that it is not a connected history of nations, but only a congeries of broken, unconnected events, do not observe the nature and design of these writings. They do not see, that Scripture is the *history of God*." Those who bear this upon their minds will easily perceive that the inspired writers never lose sight of it, but preserve one unbroken, connected chain from the beginning to the end. All over that wonderful book, as "life and immortality" (immortal life) is gradually "brought to light," so is Immanuel, God with us, and his kingdom ruling over all.

5. In the verses preceeding the text, our Lord has been arming his disciples against the fear of man : "Be not afraid," says he, (verse 4,) "of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." He guards them against this fear, first, by reminding them of what was infinitely more terrible than any thing which man could inflict : "Fear Him who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell." He guards them further against it, by the consideration of an overruling pro-

vidence : "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten before God." Or, as the words are repeated by St. Matthew, with a very inconsiderable variation, (x. 29, 30,) "Not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

6. We must indeed observe, that this strong expression, though repeated by both the evangelists, need not imply (though if any one thinks it does, he may think so very innocently) that God does literally number all the hairs that are on the heads of all his creatures: but it is a proverbial expression, implying, that nothing is so small or insignificant in the sight of men as not to be an object of the care and providence of God, before whom nothing is small that concerns the happiness of any of his creatures.

7. There is scarce any doctrine in the whole compass of revelation, which is of deeper importance than this. And at the same time, there is scarce any that is so little regarded, and perhaps so little understood. Let us endeavour then, with the assistance of God, to examine it to the bottom; to see upon what foundation it stands, and what it properly implies.

8. The eternal, almighty, all-wise, all-gracious God is the Creator of heaven and earth. He called out of nothing, by his all-powerful word, the whole universe, all that is. "Thus the heavens and the earth were created, and all the hosts of them." And after he had set all things else in array, the plants after their kinds, fish and fowl, beasts and reptiles, after their kinds, "He created man after his own image." And the Lord saw that every distinct part of the universe was good. But when he saw every thing he had made, all in connection with each other, "Behold, it was very good."

9. And as this all-wise, all-gracious Being created all things, so he sustains all things. He is the Preserver as well as the Creator of every thing that exists. "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power;" that is, by his powerful word. Now, it must be that he

knows every thing he has made, and every thing he preserves, from moment to moment; otherwise, he could not preserve it, he could not continue to it the being which he has given it. And it is nothing strange that He who is omnipresent, who "fillethe heaven and earth," who is in every place, should see what is in every place, where he is intimately present. If the eye of man discerns things at a small distance; the eye of an eagle, what is at a greater; the eye of an angel, what is at a thousand times greater distance; (perhaps taking in the surface of the earth at one view;) how shall not the eye of God see every thing, through the whole extent of creation? especially considering, that nothing is distant from Him in whom we all "live, and move, and have our being."

10. It is true, our narrow understandings but imperfectly comprehend this. But whether we comprehend it or no, we are certain that so it is. As certain as it is, that he created all things, and that he still sustains all that is created; so certain it is, that he is present, at all times, in all places; that he is above, beneath; that he "besets us behind and before," and, as it were, "lays his hand upon us." We allow, "such knowledge is too high" and wonderful for us; we "cannot attain unto it." The manner of his presence no man can explain, nor, probably, any angel in heaven. Perhaps what the ancient philosopher speaks of the soul, in regard to its residence in the body, that it is *tota in toto, et tota in quâlibet parte*, might, in some sense, be spoken of the omnipresent Spirit, in regard to the universe; that he is not only "All in the whole," but "All in every part." Be this as it may, it cannot be doubted but He sees every atom of his creation, and that a thousand times more clearly than we see the things that are close to us: even of these we see only the surface, while He sees the inmost essence of every thing.

11. The omnipresent God sees and knows all the properties of the beings that he hath made. He knows all the connections, dependencies, and relations, and all

the ways wherein one of them can affect another. In particular, he sees all the inanimate parts of the creation, whether in heaven above, or in the earth beneath. He knows how the stars, comets, or planets above influence the inhabitants of the earth beneath; what influence the lower heavens, with their magazines of fire, hail, snow, and vapours, winds, and storms, have on our planet; and what effects may be produced in the bowels of the earth by fire, air, or water; what exhalations may be raised therefrom, and what changes wrought thereby; what effects every mineral or vegetable may have upon the children of men: all these lie naked and open to the eye of the Creator and Preserver of the universe.

12. He knows all the animals of the lower world, whether beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, or insects: he knows all the qualities and powers he hath given them, from the highest to the lowest: he knows every good angel and every evil angel in every part of his dominions; and looks from heaven upon the children of men over the whole face of the earth. He knows all the hearts of the sons of men, and understands all their thoughts: he sees what any angel, any devil, any man, either thinks, or speaks, or does; yea, and all they feel: he sees all their sufferings, with every circumstance of them.

13. And is the Creator and Preserver of the world unconcerned for what he sees therein? Does he look upon these things either with a malignant or heedless eye? Is he an Epicurean god? Does he sit at ease in the heaven, without regarding the poor inhabitants of earth? It cannot be. He hath made us, not we ourselves, and he cannot despise the work of his own hands. We are his children: and can a mother forget the children of her womb? Yea, she may forget; yet will not God forget us! On the contrary, he hath expressly declared, that as his "eyes are over all the earth," so he "is loving to every man, and his mercy is over all his works." Consequently, he is concerned every moment for what befalls every creature upon earth; and more especially for every thing that befalls

any of the children of men. It is hard, indeed, to comprehend this; nay, it is hard to believe it, considering the complicated wickedness, and the complicated misery, which we see on every side. But believe it we must, unless we will make God a liar; although it is sure, no man can comprehend it. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before God, and to acknowledge our ignorance. Indeed, how can we expect that a man should be able to comprehend the ways of God? Can a worm comprehend a worm? How much less can it be supposed, that a man can comprehend God?

“For how can finite measure infinite?”

14. He is infinite in wisdom as well as in power: and all his wisdom is continually employed in managing all the affairs of his creation for the good of all his creatures. For his wisdom and goodness go hand in hand: they are inseparably united, and continually act in concert with almighty power, for the real good of all his creatures. His power, being equal to his wisdom and goodness, continually co-operates with them. And to him all things are possible: he doeth whatsoever pleaseth him, in heaven and earth, and in the sea, and all deep places: and we cannot doubt of his exerting all his power, as in sustaining, so in governing, all that he has made.

15. Only He that can do all things else cannot deny himself: he cannot counteract himself, or oppose his own work. Were it not for this, he would destroy all sin, with its attendant pain, in a moment. He would abolish wickedness out of his whole creation, and suffer no trace of it to remain. But in so doing he would counteract himself; he would altogether overturn his own work, and undo all that he has been doing since he created man upon the earth. For he created man in his own image: a spirit like himself; a spirit endued with understanding, with will or affections, and liberty; without which, neither his understanding nor his affections could have been of any use, neither would he have been capable either of vice or virtue. He could not be

a moral agent, any more than a tree or a stone. If therefore, God were thus to exert his power, there would certainly be no more vice; but it is equally certain, neither could there be any virtue in the world. Were human liberty taken away, men would be as incapable of virtue as stones. Therefore, (with reverence be it spoken,) the Almighty himself cannot do this thing. He cannot thus contradict himself, or undo what he has done. He cannot destroy out of the soul of man that image of himself wherein he made him: and without doing this, he cannot abolish sin and pain out of the world. But were it to be done, it would imply no wisdom at all; but barely a stroke of omnipotence. Whereas all the manifold wisdom of God (as well as all his power and goodness) is displayed in governing man as man; not as a stock or stone, but as an intelligent and free spirit, capable of choosing either good or evil. Herein appears the depth of the wisdom of God, in his adorable providence; in governing men, so as not to destroy either their understanding, will, or liberty. He commands all things, both in heaven and earth, to assist man in attaining the end of his being, in working out his own salvation, so far as it can be done without compulsion, without overruling his liberty. An attentive inquirer may easily discern, the whole frame of divine providence is so constituted as to afford man every possible help, in order to his doing good and eschewing evil, which can be done without turning man into a machine; without making him incapable of virtue or vice, reward or punishment.

16. Meantime, it has been remarked by a pious writer, that there is, as he expresses it, a threefold circle of Divine providence, over and above that which presides over the whole universe. We do not now speak of that overruling hand which governs the inanimate creation, which sustains the sun, moon, and stars in their stations, and guides their motions; we do not refer to his care of the animal creation, every part of which we know is under His government "who giveth food unto

the cattle, and feedeth the young ravens that call upon him;" but we here speak of that superintending providence which regards the children of men. Each of these is easily distinguished from the others, by those who accurately observe the ways of God. The uttermost circle includes the whole race of mankind, all the descendants of Adam, all the human creatures that are dispersed over the face of the earth. This comprises not only the Christian world, those that name the name of Christ, but the Mohammedans also, who considerably outnumber even the nominal Christians; yea, and the heathens likewise, who very far outnumber the Mohammedans and Christians put together. "Is he the God of the Jews," says the apostle, "and not of the Gentiles also?" And so we may say, Is he the God of the Christians, and not of the Mohammedans and heathens? Yea, doubtless of the Mohammedans and heathens also. His love is not confined: "The Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." He careth for the very outcasts of men: it may truly be said,

"Free as the air thy bounty streams
O'er all thy works: thy mercy's beams
Diffusive as thy sun's arise."

17. Yet it may be admitted, that he takes more immediate care of those that are comprised in the second, the smaller circle; which includes all that are called Christians, all that profess to believe in Christ. We may reasonably think that these, in some degree, honour him, at least more than the heathens do: God does, likewise, in some measure, honour them, and has a nearer concern for them. By many instances it appears, that the prince of this world has not so full power over these as over the heathens. The God whom they even profess to serve does, in some measure, maintain his own cause; so that the spirits of darkness do not reign so uncontrolled over them as they do over the heathen world.

18. Within the third, the innermost circle, are contained only the real Christians; those that worship God, not in form only, but in spirit and in truth. Herein are comprised all that love God, or, at least, truly fear God and work righteousness; all in whom is the mind which was in Christ, and who walk as Christ also walked. The words of our Lord above recited peculiarly refer to these. It is to these in particular that he says, "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered." He sees their souls and their bodies; he takes particular notice of all their tempers, desires, and thoughts, all their words and actions. He marks all their sufferings, inward and outward, and the source whence they arise; so that we may well say,

"Thou know'st the pains thy servants feel,
Thou hear'st thy children's cry;
And their best wishes to fulfil,
Thy grace is ever nigh."

Nothing relative to these is too great, nothing too little, for His attention. He has his eye continually, as upon every individual person that is a member of this his family, so upon every circumstance that relates either to their souls or bodies; either to their inward or outward state; wherein either their present or eternal happiness is in any degree concerned.

19. But what say the wise men of the world to this? They answer, with all readiness, "Who doubts of this? We are not atheists. We all acknowledge a providence: that is, a general providence; for, indeed, the particular providence, of which some talk, we know not what to make of: surely the little affairs of men are far beneath the regard of the great Creator and Governor of the universe! Accordingly,

"He sees with equal eyes, as Lord of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall."

Does he, indeed? I cannot think it; because (whatever that fine poet did, or his patron, whom he so deeply despised, and yet grossly flattered) I believe the Bible;

wherein the Creator and Governor of the world himself tells me quite the contrary. That he has a tender regard for the brute creatures, I know: he does, in a measure, "take care for oxen:" he "provideth food for the cattle," as well as "herbs for the use of men." "The lions roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God." "He openeth his hand, and filleth all things living with plenteousness."

"The various troops of sea and land
In sense of common want agree;
All wait on thy dispensing hand,
And have their daily alms from thee.
They gather what thy stores disperse,
Without their trouble to provide:
Thou open'st thy hand; the universe,
The craving world, is all supplied."

Our heavenly Father feedeth the fowls of the air: but mark! "Are not ye much better than they?" Shall he not then "much more feed you," who are pre-eminent by so much odds? He does not, in that sense, look upon *you* and *them* "with *equal* eyes;" set you on a level with *them*: least of all, does he set you on a level with brutes, in respect of life and death: "Right precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Do you really think the death of a sparrow is equally precious in his sight? He tells us, indeed, that "not a sparrow falleth on the ground without our Father;" but he asks, at the same time, "Are ye not of more value than many sparrows?"

20. But, in support of a general, in contradistinction to a particular providence, the same elegant poet lays it down as an unquestionable maxim,

"The Universal Cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws;"

plainly meaning, that he never deviates from those general laws in favour of any particular person. This is a common supposition; but which is altogether inconsistent with the whole tenor of Scripture: for if God never deviates from these general laws, then there

never was a miracle in the world ; seeing every miracle is a deviation from the general laws of nature. Did the Almighty confine himself to these general laws, when he divided the Red Sea ? when he commanded the waters to stand on a heap, and make a way for his redeemed to pass over ? Did he act by general laws, when he caused the sun to stand still for the space of a whole day ? No ; nor in any of the miracles which are recorded either in the Old or New Testament

21. But it is on supposition that the Governor of the world never deviates from those general laws, that Mr. Pope adds those beautiful lines in full triumph, as having now clearly gained the point :—

“ Shall burning Etna, if a sage requires,
Forget to thunder, and recall her fires ?
On air or sea new motions be imprest,
O blameless Bethel ! to relieve thy breast ?
When the loose mountain trembles from on high,
Shall gravitation cease, if you go by ?
Or some old temple, nodding to its fall,
For Chartres’ head reserve the hanging wall ?”

We answer, If it please God to continue the life of any of his servants, he will suspend that, or any other law of nature : the stone shall not fall ; the fire shall not burn ; the floods shall not flow ; or he will give his angels charge, and in their hands shall they bear him up, through and above all dangers !

22. Admitting then, that, in the common course of nature, God does act by general laws, he has never precluded himself from making exceptions to them, whenever he pleases ; either by suspending that law in favour of those that love him, or by employing his mighty angels : by either of which means he can deliver out of all danger them that trust in him.

“ What ! You expect miracles then ?” Certainly I do, if I believe the Bible : for the Bible teaches me, that God hears and answers prayer : but every answer to prayer is, properly, a miracle. For if natural causes take their course, if things go on in their natural way, it is no answer at all. Gravitation therefore shall cease,

that is, cease to operate, whenever the Author of it pleases. Cannot the men of the world understand these things? That is no wonder : it was observed long ago, "An unwise man doth not consider this, and a fool doth not understand it."

23. But I have not done with this same general providence yet. By the grace of God, I will sift it to the bottom : and I hope to show it is such stark staring nonsense, as every man of sense ought to be utterly ashamed of.

You say, you "allow a *general* providence, but deny a *particular* one." And what is a general, of whatever kind it be, that includes no particulars? Is not every general necessarily made up of its several particulars? Can you instance in any general that is not? Tell me any genus, if you can, that contains no species? What is it that constitutes a genus, but so many species added together? What, I pray, is a whole that contains no parts? Mere nonsense and contradiction! Every whole must, in the nature of things, be made up of its several parts; insomuch that if there be no parts, there can be no whole.

24. As this is a point of the utmost importance, we may consider it a little further. What do you mean by a general providence, contradistinguished from a particular? Do you mean a providence which superintends only the larger parts of the universe? Suppose the sun, moon, and stars. Does it not regard the earth too? You allow it does. But does it not likewise regard the inhabitants of it? Else what does the earth, an inanimate lump of matter, signify? Is not one spirit, one heir of immortality, of more value than all the earth? yea, though you add to it the sun, moon, and stars? nay, and the whole inanimate creation? Might we not say, "These shall perish; but" this "remaineth: these all shall wax old as doth a garment;" but this (it may be said in a lower sense, even of the creature) is "the same," and his "years shall not fail?"

25 Or do you mean, when you assert a *general*

providence, distinct from a particular one, that God regards only some parts of the world, and does not regard others? What parts of it does he regard? those without, or those within the solar system? Or does he regard some parts of the earth, and not others? Which parts? only those within the temperate zones? What parts then are under the care of his providence? Where will you lay the line? Do you exclude from it those that live in the torrid zone? or those that dwell within the arctic circles? Nay, rather say, "The Lord is loving to every man," and his care "is over all his works."

26. Do you mean (for we would fain find out your meaning, if you have any meaning at all) that the providence of God does indeed extend to all parts of the earth, with regard to great and singular events, such as the rise and fall of empires; but that the little concerns of this or that man are beneath the notice of the Almighty? Then you do not consider that *great* and *little* are merely relative terms, which have place only with respect to men. With regard to the Most High, man and all the concerns of men are nothing, less than nothing, before Him. And nothing is small in his sight that in any degree affects the welfare of any that fear God and work righteousness. What becomes, then, of your general providence, exclusive of a particular? Let it be for ever rejected by all rational men, as absurd, self-contradictory nonsense. We may then sum up the whole scriptural doctrine of providence in that fine saying of St. Austin, *Ita præsidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis!*

"Father, how wide thy glories shine,
Lord of the universe—and mine!
Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one soul;
Yet keeps my every sacred hair,
As I remain'd thy single care!"

27. We may learn from this short view of the providence of God, first, to put our whole trust in Him

who hath never failed them that seek him. Our blessed Lord himself makes this very use of the great truth now before us. "Fear not, therefore:" if you truly fear God, you need fear none besides. He will be a strong tower to all that trust in him from the face of your enemies. What is there either in heaven or in earth that can harm you, while you are under the care of the Creator and Governor of heaven and earth? Let all earth and all hell combine against you; yea, the whole animate and inanimate creation; they cannot harm, while God is on your side: his favourable kindness covers you as a shield.

28. Nearly allied to this confidence in God is the thankfulness we owe for this kind protection. Let those give thanks whom the Lord thus delivers from the hand of all their enemies. What an unspeakable blessing it is to be the peculiar care of Him that has all power in heaven and earth! How can we sufficiently praise him, while we are under his wings, and his faithfulness and truth are our shield and buckler!

29. But meantime we should take the utmost care to walk humbly and closely with our God. Walk *humbly*: for if you in anywise rob God of his honour, if you ascribe any thing to yourself, the things which should have been for your wealth will prove to you an "occasion of falling." And walk *closely*: see that you have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. It is so long as you do this that you are the peculiar care of your Father which is in heaven. But let not the consciousness of his caring for you make you careless, indolent, or slothful: on the contrary, while you are penetrated with that deep truth, "The help that is done upon earth, He doeth it himself," be as earnest and diligent in the use of all the means as if you were your own protector.

Lastly: in what a melancholy condition are those who do not believe there is any providence; or, which comes to exactly the same point, not a particular one! Whatever station they are in, as long as they are in the world,

they are exposed to numberless dangers which no human wisdom can foresee, and no human power can resist. And there is no help ! If they trust in men, they find them "deceitful upon the weights." In many cases they cannot help ; in others, they will not. But were they ever so willing, they will die : therefore vain is the help of man. And God is far above, out of their sight : they expect no help from him. These modern (as well as the ancient) Epicureans have learned that the

" Universal Cause
Acts not by partial, but by general laws."

He only takes care of the great globe itself : not of its puny inhabitants. He heeds not how those

" Vagrant emmets crawl
At random on the air-suspended ball."

How uncomfortable is the situation of that man who has no further hope than this ! But, on the other hand, how unspeakably "happy is the man that hath the Lord for his help, and whose hope is in the Lord his God !" who can say, "I have set the Lord always before me ; because he is on my right hand, I shall not be moved." Therefore, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

SERMON LXVIII.

THE WISDOM OF GOD'S COUNSELS.

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"—ROM. xi. 33.

1. SOME apprehend the wisdom and the knowledge of God to mean one and the same thing. Others believe that the wisdom of God more directly refers to his appointing the ends of all things; and his knowledge, to the means which he hath prepared and made conducive to those ends. The former seems to be the most natural explication; as the wisdom of God, in its most extensive meaning, must include the one as well as the other, the means as well as the ends.

2. Now the wisdom as well as the power of God is abundantly manifested in his creation; in the formation and arrangement of all his works, in heaven above and in the earth beneath; and in adapting them all to the several ends for which they were designed: insomuch that each of them, apart from the rest, is good; but all together are *very good*: all conspiring together, in one connected system, to the glory of God in the happiness of his intelligent creatures.

3. As this wisdom appears even to short-sighted men (and much more to spirits of a higher order) in the creation and disposition of the whole universe, and every part of it; so it equally appears in their preservation, in his "upholding all things by the word of his power." And it no less eminently appears in the permanent government of all that he has created. How admirably does his wisdom direct the motions of the heavenly bodies! of all the stars in the firmament, whether those

that are fixed, or those that wander, though never out of their several orbits ! of the sun in the midst of heaven ! of those amazing bodies, the comets, that shoot in every direction through the immeasurable field of ether ! How does he superintend all the parts of this lower world, this "speck of creation," the earth ! So that all things are still, as they were at the beginning, "beautiful in their seasons ;" and summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, regularly follow each other. Yea, all things serve their Creator : "fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm, are fulfilling his word ;" so that we may well say, "O Lord, our Governor, how excellent is thy name in all the earth !"

4. Equally conspicuous is the wisdom of God in the government of nations, of states and kingdoms : yea, rather, more conspicuous ; if infinite can be allowed to admit of any degrees. For the whole inanimate creation, being totally passive and inert, can make no opposition to his will. Therefore, in the natural world all things roll on in an even, uninterrupted course. But it is far otherwise in the moral world. Here evil men and evil spirits continually oppose the Divine will, and create numberless irregularities. Here, therefore, is full scope for the exercise of all the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, in counteracting all the wickedness and folly of men, and all the subtlety of Satan, to carry on his own glorious design,—the salvation of lost mankind. Indeed, were he to do this by an absolute decree and by his own irresistible power, it would imply no wisdom at all. But his wisdom is shown by saving man in such a manner as not to destroy his nature, not to take away the liberty which he has given him.

5. But the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God are most eminently displayed in his church : in planting it like a grain of mustard-seed, the least of all seeds ; in preserving and continually increasing it, till it grew into a great tree, notwithstanding the uninterrupted opposition of all the powers of darkness. This the apostle justly terms *the manifold wisdom*

(πολυποικίλος σοφία) of *God*. It is an uncommonly expressive word, intimating that this wisdom, in the manner of its operation, is diversified a thousand ways, and exerts itself with infinite varieties. These things the highest "angels desire to look into," but can never fully comprehend. It seems to be with regard to these chiefly that the apostle utters that strong exclamation, "How unsearchable are his judgments!" his counsels, designs, impossible to be fathomed; "and his ways" of accomplishing them "past finding out!" impossible to be traced. According to the psalmist, "his paths are in the deep waters, and his footsteps are not known."

6. But a little of this he has been pleased to reveal unto us; and by keeping close to what he has revealed, meantime comparing the word and the work of God together, we may understand a part of his ways. We may in some measure trace this manifold wisdom from the beginning of the world; from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, and from Moses to Christ. But I would now consider it (after just touching on the history of the church in past ages) only with regard to what he has wrought in the present age, during the last half century; yea, and in this little corner of the world, the British Islands only.

7. In the fulness of time, just when it seemed best to his infinite wisdom, God brought his first-begotten into the world. He then laid the foundation of his church; though it hardly appeared till the day of Pentecost. And it was then a glorious church; all the members thereof being "filled with the Holy Ghost;" being "of one heart and of one mind, and continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers." In *fellowship*; that is, having all things in common; no man counting any thing he had his own.

"Meek, simple followers of the Lamb,
They lived, and thought, and spake the same:
They all were of one heart and soul,
And only love inspired the whole."

8. But this happy state did not continue long. See Ananias and Sapphira, through the love of money, ("the root of all evil,") making the first breach in the community of goods! See the partiality, the unjust respect of persons on the one side, the resentment and murmuring on the other, even while the apostles themselves presided over the church at Jerusalem! See the grievous spots and wrinkles that were found in every part of the church, recorded not only in the Acts, but in the Epistles of St. Paul, James, Peter, and John. A still fuller account we have in the Revelation: and, according to this, in what a condition was the Christian church, even in the first century, even before St. John was removed from the earth; if we may judge (as undoubtedly we may) of the state of the church in general from the state of those particular churches (all but those of Smyrna and Philadelphia) to which our Lord directed his Epistles! And from this time, for fourteen hundred years, it was corrupted more and more, as all history shows, till scarce any either of the power or form of religion was left.

9. Nevertheless it is certain, that the gates of hell did never totally prevail against it. God always reserved a seed for himself; a few that worshipped him in spirit and in truth. I have often doubted, whether these were not the very persons whom the rich and honourable Christians, who will always have number as well as power on their side, did not stigmatize, from time to time, with the title of "heretics." Perhaps it was chiefly by this artifice of the devil and his children, that, the good which was in them being evil spoken of, they were prevented from being so extensively useful as otherwise they might have been. Nay, I have doubted whether that arch-heretic, Montanus, was not one of the holiest men in the second century. Yea, I would not affirm, that the arch-heretic of the fifth century (as plentifully as he has been bespattered for many ages) was not one of the holiest men of that age, not excepting St Augustine himself; a wonderful saint! as full of

pride, passion, bitterness, censoriousness, and as foul-mouthed to all that contradicted him, as George Fox himself. I verily believe, the real heresy of Pelagius was neither more nor less than this: the holding that Christians may, by the grace of God, (not without it; that I take to be a mere slander,) go on to perfection;" or, in other words, "fulfil the law of Christ."

"But St. Augustine says:"—when Augustine's passions were heated, his word is not worth a rush. And here is the secret: St. Augustine was angry at Pelagius; hence he slandered and abused him, (as his manner was,) without either fear or shame. And St. Augustine was then in the Christian world, what Aristotle was afterwards: there needed no other proof of any assertion, than *Ipse dixit*: "St. Augustine said it."

10. But to return: when iniquity had overspread the church as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against it. He raised up a poor monk, without wealth, without power, and, at that time, without friends, to declare war, as it were, against all the world; against the Bishop of Rome and all his adherents. But this little stone, being chosen of God, soon grew into a great mountain; and increased more and more, till it had covered a considerable part of Europe. Yet even before Luther was called home, the love of many was waxed cold. Many, that had once run well, turned back from the holy commandment delivered to them; yea, the greater part of those that once experienced the power of faith made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. The observing this was supposed to be the occasion of that illness (a fit of the stone) whereof Luther died; after uttering these melancholy words: "I have spent my strength for naught! Those who are called by my name are, it is true, reformed in opinions and modes of worship; but in their hearts and lives, in their tempers and practice, they are not a jot better than the Papists!"

11. About the same time, it pleased God to visit Great Britain. A few in the reign of King Henry the

Eighth, and many more in the three following reigns were real witnesses of true, scriptural Christianity. The number of these exceedingly increased in the beginning of the following century. And in the year 1627 there was a wonderful pouring out of the Spirit in several parts of England, as well as in Scotland, and the north of Ireland. But from the time that riches and honour poured in upon them that feared and loved God, their hearts began to be estranged from him, and to cleave to the present world. No sooner was persecution ceased, and the poor, despised, persecuted Christians invested with power, and placed in ease and affluence, but a change of circumstances brought a change of spirit. Riches and honour soon produced their usual effects. Having the world, they quickly loved the world: they no longer breathed after heaven, but became more and more attached to the things of earth. So that in a few years, one who knew and loved them well, and was an unexceptionable judge of men and manners, (Dr. Owen,) deeply lamented over them, as having lost all the life and power of religion, and being become just of the same spirit with those whom they despised as the mire in the streets.

12. What little religion was left in the land received another deadly wound at the Restoration, by one of the worst princes that ever sat on the English throne, and by the most abandoned court in Europe. And infidelity now broke in again, and overspread the land as a flood. Of course, all kinds of immorality came with it, and increased to the end of the century. Some feeble attempts were made to stem the torrent during the reign of Queen Anne; but it still increased till about the year 1725, when Mr. Law published his "Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection," and, not long after, his "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life." Here the seed was sown, which soon grew up, and spread to Oxford, London, Bristol, Leeds, York, and, within a few years, to the greatest part of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

13. But what means did the wisdom of God make use of in effecting this great work? He thrust out such labourers into his harvest as the wisdom of man would never have thought on. He chose the weak things to confound the strong, and the foolish things to confound the wise. He chose a few young, poor, ignorant men, without experience, learning, or art; but simple of heart, devoted to God, full of faith and zeal, seeking no honour, no profit, no pleasure, no ease, but merely to save souls; fearing neither want, pain, persecution, nor whatever man could do unto them; yea, not counting their lives dear unto themselves, so they might finish their course with joy. Of the same spirit were the people whom God by their word called out of darkness into his marvellous light, many of whom soon agreed to join together, in order to strengthen each other's hands in God. These also were simple of heart, devoted to God, zealous of good works; desiring neither honour, nor riches, nor pleasure, nor ease, nor any thing under the sun; but to attain the whole image of God, and to dwell with him in glory.

14. But as these young preachers grew in years, they did not all grow in grace. Several of them indeed increased in other knowledge; but not proportionably in the knowledge of God. They grew less simple, less alive to God, and less devoted to him. They were less zealous for God; and, consequently, less active, less diligent, in his service. Some of them began to desire the praise of men, and not the praise of God only; some to be weary of a wandering life, and so to seek ease and quietness. Some began again to fear the faces of men; to be ashamed of their calling; to be unwilling to deny themselves; to take up their cross daily, "and endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." Wherever these preachers laboured, there was not much fruit of their labours. Their word was not, as formerly, clothed with power; it carried with it no demonstration of the Spirit. The same faintness of spirit was in their private conversation. They were no longer "instant

in season, out of season," "warning every man, and exhorting every man," "if by any means they might save some."

15. And as some preachers declined from their first love, so did many of the people. They were likewise assaulted on every side; encompassed with manifold temptations; and while many of them triumphed over all, and were "more than conquerors through Him that loved them," others gave place to the world, the flesh, or the devil, and so "entered into temptation:" some of them "made shipwreck of their faith" at once; some by slow, insensible degrees. Not a few, being in want of the necessities of life, were overwhelmed with the cares of the world; many relapsed into "the desires of other things," which "choked the good seed, and it became unfruitful."

16. But of all temptations, none so struck at the whole work of God as "the deceitfulness of riches;" a thousand melancholy proofs of which I have seen within these last fifty years. Deceitful are they indeed! For who will believe they do him the least harm? And yet I have not known threescore rich persons, perhaps not half the number, during threescore years, who, as far as I can judge, were not less holy than they would have been had they been poor. By riches I mean, not thousands of pounds, but any more than will procure the conveniences of life. Thus I account him a rich man who has food and raiment for himself and family, without running into debt, and something over. And how few are there in these circumstances who are not hurt, if not destroyed, thereby! Yet who takes warning? Who seriously regards that awful declaration of the apostle: even "they that desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition?" How many sad instances have we seen of this in London, in Bristol, in Newcastle; in all the large trading towns throughout the kingdom, where God has lately caused his power to be known! See how many of those who

were once simple of heart, desiring nothing but God, are now gratifying "the desire of the flesh;" studying to please their senses, particularly their taste; endeavouring to enlarge the pleasure of tasting as far as possible. Are not *you* of that number? Indeed, you are no drunkard, and no glutton; but do you not indulge yourself in a kind of regular sensuality? Are not eating and drinking the greatest pleasures of your life? the most considerable part of your happiness? If so, I fear St. Paul would have given you a place among those "whose god is their belly!" How many of them are now again indulging "the desire of the eye!" using every means which is in their power to enlarge the pleasures of their imagination! if not in grandeur, which as yet is out of their way; yet in new or beautiful things! Are not you seeking happiness in pretty or elegant apparel, or furniture? or in new clothes, or books, or in pictures, or gardens? "Why, what harm is there in these things?" There is this harm, that they gratify "the desire of the eye," and thereby strengthen and increase it; making you more and more dead to God, and more alive to the world. How many are indulging "the pride of life!" seeking the honour that cometh of men! or "laying up treasures on earth!" They *gain all they can*, honestly and conscientiously. They *save all they can*, by cutting off all needless expense; by adding frugality to diligence. And so far all is right. This is the duty of every one that fears God. But they do not *give all they can*; without which they must needs grow more and more earthly-minded. Their affections will cleave to the dust more and more; and they will have less and less communion with God. Is not this *your* case? Do you not seek the praise of men more than the praise of God? Do not *you* lay up, or at least desire and endeavour to "lay up, treasures on earth?" Are you not then (deal faithfully with your own soul!) more and more alive to the world, and, consequently, more and more dead to God? It cannot be otherwise. That *must* follow, unless you give all you

can, as well as gain and save all you can. There is no other way under heaven to prevent your money from sinking you lower than the grave! For "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And if it *was* in him in ever so high a degree, yet if he slides into the love of the world, by the same degrees that this enters in, the love of God will go out of the heart.

17 And perhaps there is something more than all this contained in those words, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world." Here we are expressly warned against loving the *world*, as well as against loving "the things of the world." The *world* is the men that know not God, that neither love nor fear him. To love these with a love of delight or complacence, to set our affections upon them, is here absolutely forbidden; and, by parity of reason, to converse or have any intercourse with them, farther than necessary business requires. Friendship or intimacy with them, St. James does not scruple to term adultery. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend to the world is an enemy of God." Do not endeavour to shuffle away, or evade, the meaning of those strong words. They plainly require us to stand aloof from them, to have no needless commerce with unholy men. Otherwise we shall surely slide into conformity to the world; to their maxims, spirit, and customs. For not only their words, harmless as they seem, do eat as doth a canker; but their very breath is infectious: their spirit imperceptibly influences our spirit. It steals "like water into our bowels, and like oil into our bones."

18. But all rich men are under a continual temptation to acquaintance and conversation with worldly men. They are likewise under a continual temptation to pride, to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. They are strongly tempted to revenge, when they are ever so little affronted: and, having the means

in their own hands, how few are there that resist the temptation! They are continually tempted to sloth, indolence, love of ease, softness, delicacy; to hatred of self-denial, and taking up the cross, even that of fasting and rising early, without which it is impossible to grow in grace. If *you* are increased in goods, do not you know that these things are so? Do you contract no intimacy with worldly men? Do not you converse with them more than duty requires? Are you in no danger of pride? of thinking yourself better than your poor, dirty neighbours? Do you never resent, yea, and revenge an affront? Do you never render evil for evil? Do not you give way to indolence, or love of ease? Do you deny yourself, and take up your cross daily? Do you constantly rise as early as you did once? Why not? Is not your soul as precious now as it was then? How often do you fast? Is not this a duty to you, as much as to a day-labourer? But if you are wanting in this or any other respect, who will tell you of it? Who dares tell you the plain truth, but those who neither hope nor fear any thing from you? And if any venture to deal plainly with you, how hard is it for you to bear it! Are not you far less reprovable, far less advisable, than when you were poor? It is well if you can bear reproof even from *me*; and in a few days you will see me no more.

Once more, therefore, I say, having gained and saved all you can, do you give all you can? else your money will eat your flesh as fire, and will sink you to the nethermost hell! Oh, beware of "laying up treasures upon earth!" Is it not treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath?

Lord, I have warned them! but if they will not be warned, what can I do more? I can only "give them up unto their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations!"

19. By not taking this warning, it is certain many of the Methodists are already fallen; many are falling at this very time; and there is great reason to apprehend

that many more will fall, most of whom will rise no more!

But what method may it be hoped the all-wise God will take to repair the decay of his work? If he does not remove the candlestick from this people, and raise up another people, who will be more faithful to his grace, it is probable he will proceed in the same manner as he has done in time past. And this has hitherto been his method: when any of the old preachers left their first love, lost their simplicity and zeal, and departed from the work, he raised up young men who *are* what they *were*, and sent them into the harvest in their place. The same he has done when he was pleased to remove any of his faithful labourers into Abraham's bosom. So when Henry Millard, Edward Dunstone, John Manners, Thomas Walsh, or others, rested from their labours, he raised up other young men, from time to time, willing and able to perform the same service. It is highly probable, he will take the very same method for the time to come. The place of those preachers who either die in the Lord, or lose the spiritual life which God had given them, he will supply by others that are alive to God, and desire only to spend and be spent for him.

20. Hear ye this, all ye preachers who have not the same life, the same communion with God, the same zeal for his cause, the same burning love to souls, that you had once! "Take heed unto yourselves, that ye lose not the things ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward." Beware lest God swear in his wrath, that ye shall bear his standard no more! lest he be provoked to take the word of his grace utterly out of your mouth! Be assured, the Lord hath no need of *you*; *his* work doth not depend upon *your* help. As he is able "out of stones to raise up children to Abraham;" so he is able out of the same to raise up preachers after his own heart! Oh, make haste! Remember from whence *you* are fallen; and repent, and do the first works!

21. Would it not provoke the Lord of the harvest to

lay you altogether aside, if you *despised* the labourers he had raised up, merely because of their *youth*? This was commonly done to us when *we* were first sent out, between forty and fifty years ago. Old, wise men asked, "What will these *young* heads do?" So the then Bishop of London in particular. But shall we adopt their language? God forbid! Shall we teach him whom he shall send; whom he shall employ in his own work? Are we then the men, and shall wisdom die with us? Does the work of God hang upon us? Oh, humble yourself before God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver!

22. Let us next consider what method has the wisdom of God taken, for these five-and-forty years, when thousands of the people that once ran well, one after another, "drew back to perdition?" Why, as fast as any of the poor were overwhelmed with worldly care, so that the seed they had received became unfruitful; and as fast as any of the rich drew back unto perdition, by giving way to the love of the world, to foolish and hurtful desires, or to any other of those innumerable temptations which are inseparable from riches; God has constantly, from time to time, raised up men, endued with the spirit which they had lost: yea, and generally this change has been made with considerable advantage: for the last were, not only (for the most part) more numerous than the first, but more watchful, profiting by their example; more spiritual, more heavenly-minded, more zealous, more alive to God, and more dead to all things here below.

23. And, blessed be God, we see he is now doing the same thing in various parts of the kingdom. In the room of those that have fallen from their steadfastness, or are falling at this day, he is continually raising up out of the stones other children to Abraham. This he does at one or another place, according to his own will; pouring out his quickening Spirit on this or another people, just as it pleaseth him. He is raising up those of every age and degree, young men and maidens, old men and

children to be "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; to show forth His praise, who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." And we have no reason to doubt but he will continue so to do, till the great promise is fulfilled; till "the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; till all Israel is saved and the fulness of the Gentiles is come in."

24. But have all that have sunk under manifold temptations, so fallen that they can rise no more? Hath the Lord cast them all off for ever, and will he be no more entreated? Is his promise come utterly to an end for evermore? God forbid that we should affirm this! Surely he is able to heal all their backslidings: for with God no word is impossible. And is he not willing too? He is "God, and not man; therefore his compassions fail not." Let no backslider despair. "Return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; unto our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

Meantime, thus saith the Lord to you that now supply their place, Be "not high-minded, but fear!" If "the Lord spared not" thy elder brethren, "take heed lest he spare not thee!" Fear, though not with a servile, tormenting fear, lest thou fall by any of the same temptations; by either the care of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, or the desire of other things. Tempted you will be in ten thousand different ways, perhaps as long as you remain in the body; but as long as you continue to watch and pray, you will not "enter into temptations." His grace has been hitherto sufficient for you; and so it will be unto the end.

25. You see here, brethren, a short and general sketch of the manner wherein God works upon earth, in repairing his work of grace, wherever it is decayed through the subtlety of Satan, and the unfaithfulness of men, giving way to the fraud and malice of the devil. Thus he is now carrying on his own work, and thus **he**

will do to the end of time. And how wonderfully plain and simple is his way of working, in the spiritual as well as the natural world ! that is, his general plan of working, of repairing whatsoever is decayed. But as to innumerable particulars, we must still cry out, " Oh the depth ! How unfathomable are his counsels, and his paths past tracing out ! "

SERMON LXIX.

THE IMPERFECTION OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE.

“ *We know in part.*”—1 COR. xiii. 9.

1. THE desire of knowledge is a universal principle in man, fixed in his inmost nature. It is not variable, but constant in every rational creature, unless while it is suspended by some stronger desire. And it is insatiable: “the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing;” neither the mind with any degree of knowledge which can be conveyed into it. And it is planted in every human soul for excellent purposes. It is intended to hinder our taking up our rest in any thing here below; to raise our thoughts to higher and higher objects, more and more worthy our consideration, till we ascend to the Source of all knowledge and all excellence, the all-wise and all-gracious Creator.

2. But although our desire of knowledge has no bounds, yet our knowledge itself has. It is, indeed, confined within very narrow bounds; abundantly narrower than common people imagine, or men of learning are willing to acknowledge: a strong intimation, (since the great Creator doeth nothing in vain,) that there will be some future state of being, wherein that now insatiable desire will be satisfied, and there will be no longer so immense a distance between the appetite and the object of it.

3. The present knowledge of man is exactly adapted to his present wants. It is sufficient to warn us of, and to preserve us from, most of the evils to which we are

now exposed; and to procure us whatever is necessary for us in this our infant state of existence. We know enough of the nature and sensible qualities of the things that are round about us, so far as they are subservient to the health and strength of our bodies; we know how to procure and prepare our food; we know what raiment is fit to cover us; we know how to build our houses, and to furnish them with all necessities and conveniences; we know just as much as is conducive to our living comfortably in this world: but of innumerable things above, below, and round about us, we know little more than that they exist. And in this our deep ignorance is seen the goodness as well as the wisdom of God, in cutting short his knowledge on every side, on purpose to "hide pride from man."

4. Therefore it is, that by the very constitution of their nature, the wisest of men "know" but "in part." And how amazingly small a part do they know, either of the Creator or of his works! This is a very needful, but a very displeasing theme; for "vain man would be wise." Let us reflect upon it for a while. And may the God of wisdom and love open our eyes to discern our own ignorance.

I. 1. To begin with the great Creator himself. How astonishingly little do we know of God!—How small a part of his nature do we know! of his essential attributes! What conception can we form of his omnipresence? Who is able to comprehend how God is in this and every place? how he fills the immensity of space? If philosophers, by denying the existence of a vacuum, only meant that there is no place empty of God, that every point of infinite space is full of God, certainly no man could call it in question. But still, the fact being admitted, what is omnipresence or ubiquity? Man is no more able to comprehend this, than to grasp the universe.

2. The omnipresence or immensity of God, Sir Isaac Newton endeavours to illustrate by a strong expression, by terming infinite space "the sensorium of the Deity."

And the very heathens did not scruple to say, "All things are full of God:" just equivalent with his own declaration,—“Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” How beautifully does the psalmist illustrate this! “Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I go up into heaven, thou art there: if I go down to hell, thou art there also. If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there thy hand shall find me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” But, in the mean time, what conception can we form, either of his eternity or immensity? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: we cannot attain unto it.

3. A second essential attribute of God is eternity. He existed before all time. Perhaps we might more properly say, He *does exist* from everlasting to everlasting. But what is eternity? A celebrated author says, that the Divine eternity is *vitæ interminabilis tota simul et perfecta possessio*: “the at once entire and perfect possession of never-ending life.” But how much wiser are we for this definition? We know just as much of it as we did before. “The at once entire and perfect possession!” Who can conceive what this means?

4. If indeed God had stamped (as some have maintained) an idea of himself on every human soul, we must certainly have understood something of these, as well as his other attributes; for we cannot suppose he would have impressed upon us either a false or an imperfect idea of himself; but the truth is, no man ever did or does now find any such idea stamped upon his soul. The little which we do know of God, (except what we receive by the inspiration of the Holy One,) we do not gather from any inward impression, but gradually acquire from without. “The invisible things of God,” if they are known at all, “are known from the things that are made;” not from what God hath written in our hearts, but from what he hath written in all his works.

5. Hence then, from his works, particularly his works of creation, we are to learn the knowledge of God. But it is not easy to conceive how little we know even of these. To begin with those that are at a distance: Who knows how far the universe extends? What are the limits of it? The morning stars can tell, who sang together when the lines of it were stretched out; when God said, "This be thy just circumference, O world!" But all beyond the fixed stars is utterly hid from the children of men. And what do we know of the fixed stars? Who telleth the number of them? even that small portion of them that, by their mingled light, form what we call "the milky way?" And who knows the use of them? Are they so many suns that illuminate their respective planets. Or do they only minister to this, (as Mr. Hutchinson supposes,) and contribute, in some unknown way, to the perpetual circulation of light and spirit? Who knows what comets are? Are they planets not fully formed? or planets destroyed by a conflagration? Or are they bodies of a wholly different nature, of which we can form no idea? Who can tell what is the sun? Its use we know; but who knows of what substance it is composed? Nay, we are not yet able to determine whether it be fluid or solid! Who knows what is the precise distance of the sun from the earth? Many astronomers are persuaded it is a hundred millions of miles; others, that it is only eighty-six millions, though generally accounted ninety. But equally great men say, it is no more than fifty; some of them, that it is but twelve: last comes Dr. Rogers, and demonstrates that it is just two millions nine hundred thousand miles! So little do we know even of this glorious luminary, the eye and soul of the lower world! And just as much of the planets that surround him; yea, of our own planet, the moon. Some indeed have discovered

"Rivers and mountains on her spotty globe;"

yea, have marked out all her seas and continents!—but

after all, we know just nothing of the matter. We have nothing but mere uncertain conjecture concerning the nearest of all the heavenly bodies.

6. But let us come to the things that are still nearer home, and inquire what knowledge we have of them. How much do we know of that wonderful body, light? How is it communicated to us? Does it flow in a continued stream from the sun? Or does the sun impel the particles next his orb, and so on and on, to the extremity of his system? Again: does light gravitate or not? Does it attract or repel other bodies? Is it subject to the general laws which obtain in all other matter? Or is it a body *sui generis*, altogether different from all other matter? Is it the same with electric fluid, or not? Who can explain the phenomena of electricity? Who knows why some bodies conduct the electric fluid, and others arrest its course? Why is the phial capable of being charged to such a point, and no further? A thousand more questions might be asked on this head, which no man living can answer.

7. But surely we understand the air we breathe, and which encompasses us on every side. By that admirable property of elasticity, it is the general spring of nature. But is elasticity essential to air, and inseparable from it? Nay, it has been lately proved, by numberless experiments, that air may be fixed, that is, divested of its elasticity, and generated or restored to it again. Therefore it is no otherwise elastic than as it is connected with electric fire. And is not this electric or ethereal fire the only true essential elastic in nature? Who knows by what power, dew, rain, and other vapours rise and fall in the air? Can we account for the phenomenon of them upon the common principles? Or must we own, with a late ingenious author, that those principles are utterly insufficient; and that they cannot be rationally accounted for, but upon the principle of electricity?

8. Let us now descend to the earth which we tread

upon, and which God has peculiarly given to the children of men. Do the children of men understand this? Suppose the terraqueous globe to be seven or eight thousand miles in diameter, how much of this do we know? Perhaps a mile or two of its surface: so far the art of man has penetrated. But who can inform us what lies beneath the region of stones, metals, minerals, and other fossils? This is only a thin crust, which bears an exceeding small proportion to the whole. Who can acquaint us with the inner parts of the globe? Whereof do these consist? Is there a central fire, a grand reservoir, which not only supplies the burning mountains, but also ministers (though we know not how) to the ripening of gems and metals; yea, and perhaps to the production of vegetables, and the well-being of animals too? Or is the great deep still contained in the bowels of the earth? a central abyss of waters? Who hath seen? Who can tell? Who can give any solid satisfaction to a rational inquirer?

9. How much of the very surface of the globe is still utterly unknown to us! How very little do we know of the polar regions, either north or south, either in Europe or Asia! How little of those vast countries, the inland parts either of Africa or America! Much less do we know what is contained in the broad sea, the great abyss, which covers so large a part of the globe. Most of its chambers are inaccessible to man, so that we cannot tell how they are furnished. How little do we know of those things on the dry land which fall directly under our notice! Consider even the most simple metals or stones: how imperfectly are we acquainted with their nature and properties! Who knows what it is that distinguishes metals from all other fossils? It is answered, "Why, they are heavier." Very true; but what is the cause of their being heavier? What is the specific difference between metals and stones? or between one metal and another? between gold and silver? between tin and lead? It is all mystery to the sons of men.

10. Proceed we to the vegetable kingdom. Who can demonstrate that the sap, in any vegetable, performs a regular circulation through its vessels, or that it does not? Who can point out the specific difference between one kind of plant and another? or the peculiar internal conformation and disposition of their component parts? Yea, what man living thoroughly understands the nature and properties of any one plant under heaven?

11. With regard to animals: are microscopic animals, so called, *real* animals or no? If they are, are they not essentially different from all other animals in the universe, as not requiring any food, not generating or being generated? Are they no animals at all, but merely inanimate particles of matter, in a state of fermentation? How totally ignorant are the most sagacious of men touching the whole affair of generation! even the generation of men. In the book of the Creator, indeed were all our members written, "which day by day were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them:" but by what rule were they fashioned? in what manner? By what means was the first motion communicated to the *punctum saliens*? When, and how, was the immortal spirit superadded to the senseless clay? It is mystery all: and we can only say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

12. With regard to insects, many are the discoveries which have been lately made. But how little is all that is discovered yet, in comparison of what is undiscovered! How many millions of them, by their extreme minuteness, totally escape all our inquiries! And, indeed, the minute parts of the largest animals elude our utmost diligence. Have we a more complete knowledge of fishes than we have of insects? A great part, if not the greatest part, of the inhabitants of the waters are totally concealed from us. It is probable, the species of sea-animals are full as numerous as the land-animals. But how few of them are known to us! And it is a very little we know of those few. With

birds we are a little better acquainted: and, indeed, it is but a little. For of very many we know hardly any thing more than their outward shape. We know a few of the obvious properties of others, chiefly those that frequent our houses. But we have not a thorough, adequate knowledge even of them. How little do we know of beasts! We do not know whence the different tempers and qualities arise, not only in different species of them, but in individuals of the same species; yea, and frequently in those which spring from the same parents, the same both male and female animal. Are they mere machines? Then they are incapable either of pleasure or pain. Nay, they can have no senses; they neither see nor hear; they neither taste nor smell. Much less can they know, or remember, or move, any otherwise than they are impelled from without. But all this, as daily experiments show, is quite contrary to matter of fact.

13. Well; but if we know nothing else, do not we know ourselves? our bodies and our souls? What is our soul? It is a spirit, we know. But what is a spirit? Here we are at a full stop. And where is the soul lodged? in the pineal gland, in the whole brain, in the heart, in the blood, in any single part of the body, or (if any one can understand those terms) "all in all, and all in every part?" How is the soul united to the body? a spirit to a elod? What is the seeret, imperceptible chain that couples them together? Can the wisest of men give a satisfactory answer to any one of these plain questions?

And as to our body itself, how little do we know! During a night's sleep, a healthy man respires one part in four less when he sweats, than when he does not. Who can account for this? What is flesh? that of the museles in particular? Are the fibres that compose it of a determinate size, so that they can be divided only so far? Or are they resolvable *in infinitum*? How does a musele act? by being inflated, and consequently shortened? But what is it inflated with? If with

blood, how, and whence comes that blood? And whither does it go, the moment the muscle is relaxed? Are the nerves pervious or solid? How do they act? by vibration or transmission of the animal spirits? Who knows what the animal spirits are? Are they electric fire? What is sleep? Wherein does it consist? What is dreaming? How can we know dreams from waking thoughts? I doubt no man knows. Oh, how little do we know even concerning ourselves! What then can we expect to know concerning the whole creation of God?

II. 1. But are we not better acquainted with his works of providence, than with his works of creation? It is one of the first principles of religion, that his kingdom ruleth over all: so that we may say with confidence, "O Lord our Governor, how excellent is thy name over all the earth!" It is a childish conceit, to suppose chance governs the world, or has any part in the government of it: no, not even in those things that, to a vulgar eye, appear to be perfectly casual. "The lot is cast into the lap; but the disposal thereof is from the Lord." Our blessed Master himself has put this matter beyond all possible doubt: "Not a sparrow," saith he, "falleth to the ground without the will of your Father which is in heaven: yea," (to express the thing more strongly still,) "even the very hairs of your head are all numbered."

2. But although we are well apprized of this general truth, that all things are governed by the providence of God; (the very language of the heathen orator, *Deorum moderamine cuncta geri*;) yet how amazingly little do we know of the particulars contained under this general! How little do we understand of his providential dealings, either with regard to nations, or families, or individuals! There are heights and depths in all these which our understanding can in no wise fathom. We can comprehend but a small part of his ways now: the rest we shall know hereafter.

3. Even with regard to entire nations, how little do we comprehend of God's providential dealings with

them! What innumerable nations in the eastern world once flourished, to the terror of all around them, and are now swept away from the face of the earth; and their memorial is perished with them! Nor has the case been otherwise in the west. In Europe also we read of many large and powerful kingdoms, of which the names only are left: the people are vanished away, and are as though they had never been. But why it has pleased the almighty Governor of the world to sweep them away with the besom of destruction we cannot tell; those who succeeded them being, many times, little better than themselves.

4. But it is not only with regard to ancient nations that the providential dispensations of God are utterly incomprehensible to us: the same difficulties occur now. We cannot account for his present dealings with the inhabitants of the earth. We know "the Lord is loving unto every man, and his mercy is over all his works." But we know not how to reconcile this with the present dispensations of his providence. At this day, is not almost every part of the earth full of darkness and cruel habitations? In what a condition, in particular, is the large and populous empire of Indostan? How many hundred thousands of the poor quiet people have been destroyed, and their carcasses left as the dung of the earth! In what a condition (though they have no English ruffians there) are the numberless islands in the Pacific Ocean! How little is their state above that of wolves and bears! And who careth either for their souls or their bodies? But does not the Father of men care for them? Oh, mystery of providence!

5. And who cares for thousands, myriads, if not millions, of the wretched Africans? Are not whole droves of these poor sheep (human, if not rational beings!) continually driven to market, and sold like cattle, into the vilest bondage, without any hope of deliverance but by death? Who cares for those outcasts of men, the well-known Hottentots? It is true,

a late writer has taken much pains to represent them as a respectable people: but from what motive it is not easy to say; since he himself allows (a specimen of their elegance of manners) that the raw guts of sheep and other cattle are not only some of their choicest food, but also the ornaments of their arms and legs; and (a specimen of their religion) that the son is not counted a man, till he has beat his mother almost to death; and when his father grows old, he fastens him in a little hut, and leaves him there to starve! O Father of mercies! are these the works of thy own hands, the purchase of thy Son's blood?

6. How little better is either the civil or religious state of the poor American Indians! that is, the miserable remains of them. For in some provinces not one of them is left to breathe. In Hispaniola, when the Christians came thither first, there were three millions of inhabitants. Scarce twelve thousand of them now survive. And in what condition are these, or the other Indians who are still scattered up and down in the vast continent of South or North America? Religion they have none; no public worship of any kind! God is not in all their thoughts. And most of them have no civil government at all; no laws, no magistrates; but every man does what is right in his own eyes: therefore they are decreasing daily; and, very probably, in a century or two there will not be one of them left.

7. However, the inhabitants of Europe are not in so deplorable a condition. They are in a state of civilisation; they have useful laws, and are governed by magistrates; they have religion; they are Christians. I am afraid, whether they are called Christians or not, many of them have not much religion. What say you to thousands of Laplanders, of Finlanders, of Samoides, and Greenlanders? indeed, of all who live in high northern latitudes? Are they as civilized as sheep or oxen? To compare them with horses, or any of our domestic animals, would be doing them too much honour

Add to these, myriads of human savages that are freezing among the snows of Siberia, and as many, if not more, who are wandering up and down in the deserts of Tartary. Add thousands upon thousands of Poles and Muscovites; and of Christians, so called, from Turkey in Europe. And did "God so love" these, "that he gave his Son, his only-begotten Son, to the end they might not perish, but have everlasting life?" Then why are they thus? Oh, wonder above all wonders!

8. Is there not something equally mysterious in the Divine dispensation with regard to Christianity itself? Who can explain why Christianity is not spread as far as sin? Why is not the medicine sent to every place where the disease is found? But, alas! it is not; "The sound of it is" not now "gone forth into all lands." The poison is diffused over the whole globe: the antidote is not known in a sixth part of it. Nay, and how is it that the wisdom and goodness of God suffer the antidote itself to be so grievously adulterated, not only in Roman Catholic countries, but almost in every part of the Christian world? so adulterated, by mixing it frequently with useless, frequently with poisonous, ingredients, that it retains none, or at least a very small part, of its original virtue. Yea, it is so thoroughly adulterated by many of those very persons whom he has sent to administer it, that it adds tenfold malignity to the disease which it was designed to cure! In consequence of this, there is little more merey or truth to be found among Christians than among pagans. Nay, it has been affirmed, and I am afraid truly, that many called Christians are far worse than the heathens that surround them; more profligate, more abandoned to all manner of wickedness; neither fearing God, nor regarding man! Oh, who can comprehend this? Doth not He that is higher than the highest regard it?

9. Equally incomprehensible to us are many of the Divine dispensations with regard to particular families. We cannot at all comprehend, why he raises some to wealth, honour, and power; and why, in the mean time,

he depresses others with poverty and various afflictions. Some wonderfully prosper in all they take in hand, and the world pours in upon them; while others, with all their labour and toil, can scarce procure daily bread. And perhaps prosperity and applause continue with the former to their death; while the latter drink the cup of adversity to their life's end; although no reason appears to us, either for the prosperity of the one, or the adversity of the other.

10. As little can we account for the Divine dispensations with regard to individuals. We know not why the lot of this man is cast in Europe, the lot of that man in the wilds of America; why one is born of rich or noble, the other of poor parents; why the father and mother of one are strong and healthy, those of another weak and diseased, in consequence of which he drags a miserable being all the days of his life, exposed to want, and pain, and a thousand temptations, from which he finds no way to escape. How many are, from their very infancy, hedged in with such relations, that they seem to have no chance, (as some speak,) no possibility, of being useful to themselves or others? Why are they, antecedent to their own choice, entangled in such connections? Why are hurtful people so cast in their way that they know not how to escape them? And why are useful persons hid out of their sight, or snatched away from them at their utmost need? O God, how unsearchable are thy counsels! Too deep to be fathomed by our reason; and thy ways of executing those counsels not to be traced by our wisdom!

III. 1. Are we able to search out his works of grace, any more than his works of providence? Nothing is more sure than that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Why is it, then, that so vast a majority of mankind are, so far as we can judge, cut off from all means, all possibility of holiness, even from their mother's womb? For instance: what possibility is there that a Hottentot, a New-Zealander, or an inhabitant of Nova-Zembla, if he lives and dies **there**,

should ever know what holiness means? or, consequently, ever attain it? Yea, but one may say, "He sinned before he was born, in a pre-existent state: therefore, he was placed here in so unfavourable a situation; and it is mere mercy that he should have a second trial." I answer: Supposing such a pre-existent state, this, which you call a second trial, is really no trial at all. As soon as he is born into the world, he is absolutely in the power of his savage parents and relations, who, from the first dawn of reason, train him up in the same ignorance, atheism, and barbarity with themselves. He has no chance, so to speak, he has no possibility, of any better education. What trial has he then? From the time he comes into the world, till he goes out of it again, he seems to be under a dire necessity of living in all ungodliness and unrighteousness. But how is this? How can this be the case with so many millions of the souls that God has made? Art thou not "the God of all the ends of the earth, and of them that remain in the broad sea?"

2. I desire it may be observed, that if this be improved into an objection against revelation, it is an objection that lies full as much against natural as revealed religion. If it were conclusive, it would not drive us into Deism, but into flat Atheism. It would conclude, not only against the Christian revelation, but against the being of a God. And yet I see not how we can avoid the force of it, but by resolving all into the unsearchable wisdom of God; together with a deep conviction of our own ignorance and inability to fathom his counsels.

3. Even among us, who are favoured far above these, —to whom are intrusted the oracles of God, whose word is a lantern to our feet, and a light in all our paths,—there are still many circumstances in his dispensations which are above our comprehension. We know not why he suffered us so long to go on in our own ways, before we were convinced of sin; or why he made use of this or the other instrument, and in this or the other manner: and a thousand circumstances attended the

process of our conviction, which we do not comprehend. We know not why he suffered us to stay so long before he revealed his Son in our hearts; or why this change from darkness to light was accompanied with such and such particular circumstances.

4. It is doubtless the peculiar prerogative of God to reserve the "times and seasons in his own power." And we cannot give any reason, why, of two persons equally athirst for salvation, one is presently taken into the favour of God, and the other left to mourn for months or years. One, as soon as he calls upon God, is answered, and filled with peace and joy in believing; another seeks after him, and, it seems, with the same degree of sincerity and earnestness, and yet cannot find him, or any consciousness of his favour, for weeks, or months, or years. We know well this cannot possibly be owing to any absolute decree, consigning one, before he was born, to everlasting glory, and the other to everlasting fire; but we do not know what is the reason for it: it is enough that God knoweth.

5. There is, likewise, great variety in the manner and time of God's bestowing his sanctifying grace, whereby he enables his children to give him their whole heart, which we can in no wise account for. We know not why he bestows this on some, even before they ask for it; (some unquestionable instances of which we have seen;) on some, after they had sought it but a few days: and yet permits other believers to wait for it, perhaps twenty, thirty, or forty years; nay, and others, till a few hours, or even minutes, before their spirits return to him. For the various circumstances also which attend the fulfilling of that great promise, "I will circumcise thy heart, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul," God undoubtedly has reasons; but those reasons are generally hid from the children of men. Once more: some of those who are enabled to love God with all their heart and with all their soul retain the same blessing without any interruption, till they are carried to Abraham's

bosom; others do not retain it, although they are not conscious of having grieved the Holy Spirit of God. This also we do not understand: we do not herein "know the mind of the Spirit."

IV. Several valuable lessons we may learn from a deep consciousness of this our own ignorance. First, we may learn hence a lesson of humility; not "to think of ourselves," particularly with regard to our understanding, "more highly than we ought to think;" but "to think soberly;" being thoroughly convinced, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think one good thought; that we should be liable to stumble at every step, to err every moment of our lives, were it not that we have "an anointing from the Holy One," which abideth "with us;" were it not that He who knoweth what is in man, helpeth our infirmities; that "there is a spirit in man" which giveth wisdom, "and the inspiration" of the Holy One which "giveth understanding."

From hence we may learn, secondly, a lesson of faith; of confidence in God. A full conviction of our own ignorance may teach us a full trust in his wisdom. It may teach us (what is not always so easy as one would conceive it to be) to trust the invisible God, farther than we can see him. It may assist us in learning that difficult lesson, to "cast down" our own "imagination;" (or *reasonings* rather, as the word properly signifies;) to "cast down every high thing, that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." There are at present two grand obstructions to our forming a right judgment of the dealings of God with respect to men. The one is, there are innumerable *facts* relating to every man, which we do not and cannot know. They are, at present, hid from us, and covered from our search by impenetrable darkness. The other is, we cannot see *the thoughts* of men, even when we know their actions. Still we know not their *intentions*; and without this we can but ill judge of their outward actions. Conscious of

this, "judge nothing before the time," concerning his providential dispensations; till he shall bring to light "the hidden things of darkness," and manifest "the thoughts and intents of the heart."

From a consciousness of our ignorance we may learn, thirdly, a lesson of resignation. We may be instructed to say, at all times, and in all instances, "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt." This was the last lesson which our blessed Lord, as man, learned while he was upon earth. He could go no higher than "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," till he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Let us also herein be made conformable to his death, that we may know the full "power of his resurrection!"

HYMN.

O God, thou bottomless abyss,
Thee to perfection who can know?
O height immense! what words suffice
Thy countless attributes to show?
Unfathomable depths thou art;
Oh, plunge me in thy mercy's sea!
Void of true wisdom is my heart;
With love embrace and cover me!
While thee, all-infinite, I set
By faith before my ravish'd eye,
My weakness bends beneath the weight;
O'erpower'd I sink, I faint, I die!

Eternity thy fountain was,
Which, like thee, no beginning knew;
Thou wast ere time began his race,
Ere glow'd with stars th' ethereal blue.

Greatness unspeakable is thine,
 Greatness, whose undiminish'd ray,
 When short-lived worlds are lost, shall shine,
 When earth and heaven are fled away.
 Unchangeable, all-perfect Lord,
 Essential life's unbounded sea,
 What lives and moves, lives by thy word;
 It lives, and moves, and is from thee.

Thy parent-hand, thy forming skill,
 Firm fix'd this universal chain;
 Else empty, barren darkness still
 Had held his unmolested reign.
 Whate'er in earth, or sea, or sky,
 Or shuns or meets the wandering thought,
 Escapes or strikes the searching eye,
 By thee was to perfection brought!
 High is thy power above all height;
 Whate'er thy will decrees is done:
 Thy wisdom, equal to thy might,
 Only to thee, O God, is known!

Heaven's glory is thy awful throne,
 Yet earth partakes thy gracious sway:
 Vain man! thy wisdom folly own,
 Lost is thy reason's feeble ray.
 What our dim eye could never see,
 Is plain and naked to thy sight;
 What thickest darkness veils, to thee
 Shines clearly as the morning light.
 In light thou dwell'st; light that no shade,
 No variation, ever knew;
 Heaven, earth, and hell stand all display'd,
 And open to thy piercing view.

SERMON LXX.

THE CASE OF REASON IMPARTIALLY
CONSIDERED.

“Brethren, be not children in understanding : howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.”—1 COR. xiv. 20.

1. IT is the true remark of an eminent man, who had made many observations on human nature, “If reason be against a man, a man will always be against reason.” This has been confirmed by the experience of all ages. Very many have been the instances of it in the Christian as well as the heathen world ; yea, and that in the earliest times. Even then were not wanting well-meaning men who, not having much reason themselves, imagined that reason was of no use in religion ; yea, rather, that it was a hinderance to it. And there has not been wanting a succession of men who have believed and asserted the same thing. But never was there a greater number of these in the Christian church, at least in Britain, than at this day.

2. Among them that despise and vilify reason, you may always expect to find those enthusiasts who suppose the dreams of their own imagination to be revelations from God. We cannot expect that men of this turn will pay much regard to reason. Having an infallible guide, they are very little moved by the reasonings of fallible men. In the foremost of these we commonly find the whole herd of Antinomians ; all that, however they may differ in other respects, agree in “making void the law through faith.” If you oppose reason to these, when they are asserting propositions ever so full of absurdity and blasphemy, they will probably think it a sufficient

answer to say, "Oh, this is your reason;" or, "your carnal reason:" so that all arguments are lost upon them: they regard them no more than stubble or rotten wood.

3. How natural is it for those who observe this extreme, to run into the contrary! While they are strongly impressed with the absurdity of undervaluing reason, how apt are they to overvalue it! So much easier it is to run from east to west, than to stop at the middle point! Accordingly, we are surrounded with those (we find them on every side) who lay it down as an undoubted principle, that reason is the highest gift of God. They paint it in the fairest colours; they extol it to the skies. They are fond of expatiating in its praise; they make it little less than divine. They are wont to describe it as very near, if not quite, infallible. They look upon it as the all-sufficient director of all the children of men; able, by its native light, to guide them into all truth, and lead them into all virtue:

4. They that are prejudiced against the Christian revelation, who do not receive the Scriptures as the oracles of God, almost universally run into this extreme: I have scarce known any exception: so do all, by whatever name they are called, who deny the Godhead of Christ. (Indeed some of these say they do not deny his Godhead; but only his supreme Godhead. Nay, this is the same thing; for in denying him to be the supreme God, they deny him to be any God at all: unless they will assert that there are two Gods, a great one and a little one!) All these are vehement applauders of reason, as the great unerring guide. To these overvaluers of reason we may generally add men of eminently strong understanding; who, because they do know more than most other men, suppose they can know all things. But we may likewise add many who are in the other extreme; men of eminently weak understanding; men in whom pride (a very common case) supplies the void of sense; who do not suspect themselves to be blind, because they were always so.

5. Is there, then, no medium between these extremes—undervaluing and overvaluing reason? Certainly there is. But who is there to point it out?—to mark down the middle way? That great master of reason, Mr. Locke, has done something of the kind, something applicable to it, in one chapter of his Essay concerning Human Understanding. But it is only remotely applicable to this: he does not come home to the point. The good and great Dr. Watts has written admirably well, both concerning reason and faith. But neither does any thing he has written point out the medium between valuing it too little and too much.

6 I would gladly endeavour in some degree to supply this grand defect; to point out, first, to the undervaluers of it, what reason can do; and then to the overvaluers of it, what reason cannot do.

But before either the one or the other can be done, it is absolutely necessary to define the term, to fix the precise meaning of the word in question. Unless this is done, men may dispute to the end of the world, without coming to any good conclusion. This is one great cause of the numberless altercations which have been on the subject. Very few of the disputants thought of this; of defining the word they were disputing about. The natural consequence was, they were just as far from an agreement at the end as at the beginning.

I. 1. First, then, *reason* is sometimes taken for *argument*. So, "Give me a *reason* for your assertion." So in Isaiah: "Bring forth your strong *reasons*;" that is, your strong arguments. We use the word nearly in the same sense, when we say, "He has good *reasons* for what he does." It seems here to mean, he has sufficient *motives*; such as ought to influence a wise man. But how is the word to be understood in the celebrated question concerning the "*reasons of things*?" particularly when it is asked, *An rationes rerum sint æternæ?* "Whether the reasons of things are eternal?" Do not the "*reasons of things*" here mean the *relations* of things to each other? But what are the *eternal*

relations of temporal things? of things which did not exist till yesterday? Could the relations of these things exist before the things themselves had any existence? Is not then the talking of such relations a flat contradiction? Yea, as palpable a one as can be put into words.

2. In another acceptation of the word, reason is much the same with *understanding*. It means a faculty of the human soul; that faculty which exerts itself in three ways;—by simple apprehension, by judgment, and by discourse. *Simple apprehension* is barely conceiving a thing in the mind; the first and most simple act of the understanding. *Judgment* is the determining that the things before conceived either agree with or differ from each other. *Discourse*, strictly speaking, is the motion or progress of the mind from one judgment to another. The faculty of the soul which includes these three operations I here mean by the term *reason*.

3. Taking the word in this sense, let us now impartially consider, first, What is it that reason can do? And who can deny that it can do much, very much, in the affairs of common life? To begin at the lowest point: it can direct servants how to perform the various works wherein they are employed; to discharge their duty, either in the meanest offices or in any of a higher nature. It can direct the husbandman at what time, and in what manner, to cultivate his ground; to plough, to sow, to reap, to bring in his corn, to breed and manage his cattle, and to act with prudence and propriety in every part of his employment. It can direct artificers how to prepare the various sorts of apparel, and a thousand necessities and conveniences of life, not only for themselves and their households, but for their neighbours, whether nigh or afar off. It can direct those of higher abilities to plan and execute works of a more elegant kind. It can direct the painter, the statuary, the musician, to excel in the stations wherein Providence has placed them. It can direct the mariner to steer his course over the bosom of the great deep. It enables

those who study the laws of their country to defend the property or life of their fellow-subjects; and those who study the art of healing to cure most of the maladies to which we are exposed in our present state.

4. To ascend higher still: it is certain reason can assist us in going through the whole circle of arts and sciences; of grammar, rhetoric, logic, natural and moral philosophy, mathematics, algebra, metaphysics. It can teach whatever the skill or industry of man has invented for some thousand years. It is absolutely necessary for the due discharge of the most important offices; such as are those of magistrates, whether of an inferior or superior rank; and those of subordinate or supreme governors, whether of states, provinces, or kingdoms

5. All this few men in their senses will deny. No thinking man can doubt but reason is of considerable service in all things relating to the present world. But suppose we speak of higher things,—the things of another world; what can reason do here? Is it a help or a hinderance of religion? It may do much in the affairs of men; but what can it do in the things of God?

6. This is a point that deserves to be deeply considered. If you ask, What can reason do in religion? I answer, It can do exceeding much, both with regard to the foundation of it, and the superstructure.

The foundation of true religion stands upon the oracles of God. It is built upon the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. Now, of what excellent use is reason, if we would either understand ourselves, or explain to others, those living oracles! And how is it possible without it to understand the essential truths contained therein? a beautiful summary of which we have in that which is called the Apostles' Creed. Is it not reason (assisted by the Holy Ghost) which enables us to understand what the holy Scriptures declare concerning the being and attributes of God?—concerning his eternity and immensity; his power, wisdom, and holiness? It is by

reason that God enables us in some measure to comprehend his method of dealing with the children of men; the nature of his various dispensations, of the old and new covenant, of the law and the gospel. It is by this we understand (his Spirit opening and enlightening the eyes of our understanding) what that repentance is, not to be repented of; what is that faith whereby we are saved; what is the nature and the condition of justification; what are the immediate and what the subsequent fruits of it. By reason we learn what is that new birth, without which we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven; and what that holiness is without which no man shall see the Lord. By the due use of reason we come to know what are the tempers implied in inward holiness; and what it is to be outwardly holy,—holy in all manner of conversation; in other words, what is the mind that was in Christ; and what it is to walk as Christ walked.

7. Many particular cases will occur with respect to several of the foregoing articles, in which we shall have occasion for all our understanding, if we would keep a conscience void of offence. Many cases of conscience are not to be solved without the utmost exercise of our reason. The same is requisite in order to understand and to discharge our ordinary relative duties;—the duties of parents and children, of husbands and wives, and (to name no more) of masters and servants. In all these respects, and in all the duties of common life, God has given us our reason for a guide. And it is only by acting up to the dictates of it, by using all the understanding which God hath given us, that we can have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

8. Here, then, there is a large field indeed, wherein reason may expatiate and exercise all its powers. And if reason can do all this, both in civil and religious things, what is it that it cannot do?

We have hitherto endeavoured to lay aside all prejudice, and to weigh the matter calmly and impartially

8

The same course let us take still : let us now coolly consider, without prepossession on any side, what it is, according to the best light we have, that reason cannot do.

II. 1. And, first, reason cannot produce faith. Although it is always consistent with reason, yet reason cannot produce faith, in the scriptural sense of the word. Faith, according to Scripture, is “an evidence,” or conviction, “of things not seen.” It is a divine evidence, bringing a full conviction of an invisible eternal world. It is true, there was a kind of shadowy persuasion of this, even among the wiser heathens; probably from tradition, or from some gleams of light reflected from the Israelites. Hence many hundred years before our Lord was born, the Greek poet uttered that great truth,—

“Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep.”

But this was little more than faint conjecture: it was far from a high conviction: which reason, in its highest state of improvement, could never produce in any child of man.

2. Many years ago, I found the truth of this by sad experience. After carefully heaping up the strongest arguments which I could find, either in ancient or modern authors, for the very being of a God, and (which is nearly connected with it) the existence of an invisible world, I have wandered up and down, musing with myself: “What, if all those things which I see around me, this earth and heaven, this universal frame, has existed from eternity? What, if that melancholy supposition of the old poet be the real case,—

Οἱ περ φύλλων γενεῇ, τοιγδε καὶ ἀνδρῶν;

What, if ‘the generation of men be exactly parallel with the generation of leaves?’ if the earth drops its successive inhabitants, just as the tree drops its leaves? What, if that saying of a great man be really true,—

Post mortem nihil est; ipsaque mors nihil?

‘Death is nothing, and nothing is after death?’

How am I sure that this is not the case; that I have not followed cunningly-devised fables?”—And I have pursued the thought, till there was no spirit in me, and I was ready to choose strangling rather than life.

3. But in a point of so unspeakable importance, do not depend upon the word of another; but retire for a while from the busy world, and make the experiment yourself. Try whether *your* reason will give you a clear satisfactory evidence of the invisible world. After the prejudices of education are laid aside, produce your strong reasons for the existence of this. Set them all in array; silence all objections; and put all your doubts to flight. Alas! you cannot, with all your understanding. You may repress them for a season. But how quickly will they rally again, and attack you with redoubled violence! And what can poor reason do for your deliverance? The more vehemently you struggle, the more deeply you are entangled in the toils; and you find no way to escape.

4. How was the case with that great admirer of reason, the author of the maxim above cited? I mean the famous Mr. Hobbes. None will deny that he had a strong understanding. But did it produce in him a full and satisfactory conviction of an invisible world? Did it open the eyes of his understanding to see

“Beyond the bounds of this diurnal sphere?”

Oh, no! far from it! His dying words ought never to be forgotten. “Where are you going, sir?” said one of his friends. He answered, “I am taking a leap in the dark!” and died. Just such an evidence of the invisible world can bare reason give to the wisest of men!

5. Secondly. Reason alone cannot produce hope in any child of man: I mean scriptural hope, whereby we “rejoice in hope of the glory of God:” that hope which

St. Paul in one place terms, "tasting the powers of the world to come;" in another, the "sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" that which enables us to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope;—to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; which is reserved in heaven for us." This hope can only spring from Christian faith: therefore, where there is not faith, there is not hope. Consequently, reason, being unable to produce faith, must be equally unable to produce hope. Experience confirms this likewise. How often have I laboured, and that with my might, to beget this hope in myself! But it was lost labour: I could no more acquire this hope of heaven, than I could touch heaven with my hand. And whoever of you makes the same attempt will find it attended with the same success. I do not deny, that a self-deceiving enthusiast may work in himself a kind of hope: he may work himself up into a lively imagination; into a sort of pleasing dream: he may "compass himself about," as the prophet speaks, "with sparks of his own kindling:" but this cannot be of long continuance; in a little while the bubble will surely break. And what will follow? "This shall ye have at my hand, saith the Lord: ye shall lie down in sorrow."

6. If reason could have produced a hope full of immortality in any child of man, it might have produced it in that great man whom Justin Martyr scruples not to call "a Christian before Christ." For who that was not favoured with the written word of God, ever excelled, yea, or equalled, Socrates? In what other heathen can we find so strong an understanding, joined with so consummate virtue? But had he really this hope? Let him answer for himself. What is the conclusion of that noble apology which he made before his unrighteous judges? "And now, O judges! ye are going hence to live; and I am going hence to die: which of these is best, the gods know; but, I suppose, no man does." *No man knows!* How far is this from the language of

the little Benjamite: "I desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better!" And how many thousands are there at this day, even in our own nation, young men and maidens, old men and children, who are able to witness the same good confession!

7 But who is able to do this by the force of his reason, be it ever so highly improved? One of the most sensible and most amiable heathens that have lived since our Lord died, even though he governed the greatest empire in the world, was the Emperor Adrian. It is his well-known saying, "A prince ought to resemble the sun: he ought to shine on every part of his dominion, and to diffuse his salutary rays in every place where he comes." And his life was a comment upon his word: wherever he went, he was executing justice and showing mercy. Was not he, then, at the close of a long life, full of immortal hope? We are able to answer this from unquestionable authority,—from his own dying words. How inimitably pathetic!

ADRIANI MORIENTIS AD ANIMAM SUAM.

"DYING ADRIAN TO HIS SOUL."

Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes, comesque corporis,
Quæ nunc abibis in loca,
Pallidula, rigida, nudula,
Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos!

Which the English reader may see translated into our own language, with all the spirit of the original:—

"Poor, little, pretty, fluttering thing,
Must we no longer live together?
And dost thou prune thy trembling wing
To take thy flight, thou know'st not whither?"

"Thy pleasing vein, thy humorous folly,
Lies all neglected, all forgot!
And pensive, wavering, melancholy,
Thou hop'st, and fear'st, thou know'st not what."

8. Thirdly. Reason, however cultivated and im-

proved, cannot produce the love of God; which is plain from hence: it cannot produce either faith or hope; from which alone this love can flow. It is then only, when we "behold" by faith "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us," in giving his only Son, that we might not perish, but have everlasting life, that "the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." It is only then, when we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," that "we love him because he first loved us." But what can cold reason do in this matter? It may present us with fair ideas; it can draw a fine picture of love: but this is only a painted fire. And farther than this reason cannot go. I made the trial for many years. I collected the finest hymns, prayers, and meditations which I could find in any language; and I said, sang, or read them over and over, with all possible seriousness and attention. But still I was like the bones in Ezekiel's vision: "the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them."

9. And as reason cannot produce the love of God, so neither can it produce the love of our neighbour; a calm, generous, disinterested benevolence to every child of man. This earnest, steady good-will to our fellow-creatures never flowed from any fountain but gratitude to our Creator. And if this be (as a very ingenious man supposes) the very essence of virtue, it follows that virtue can have no being, unless it spring from the love of God. Therefore, as reason cannot produce this love, so neither can it produce virtue.

10. And as it cannot give either faith, hope, love, or virtue, so it cannot give happiness; since, separate from these, there can be no happiness for any intelligent creature. It is true, those who are void of all virtue may have pleasures, such as they are; but happiness they have not, cannot have. No:

"Their joy is all sadness; their mirth is all vain;
Their laughter is madness; their pleasure is pain!"

Pleasures? Shadows! dreams! fleeting as the wind!

unsubstantial as the rainbow! as unsatisfying to the poor gasping soul,

“As the gay colours of an eastern cloud.”

None of these will stand the test of reflection: if thought comes, the bubble breaks!

Suffer me now to add a few plain words, first to you who undervalue reason. Never more declaim in that wild, loose, ranting manner, against this precious gift of God. Acknowledge “the candle of the Lord,” which he hath fixed in our souls for excellent purposes. You see how many admirable ends it answers, were it only in the things of this life: of what unspeakable use is even a moderate share of reason, in all our worldly employments, from the lowest and meanest offices of life, through all the intermediate branches of business; till we ascend to those that are of the highest importance and the greatest difficulty! When therefore you despise or depreciate reason, you must not imagine you are doing God service: least of all are you promoting the cause of God when you are endeavouring to exclude reason out of religion. Unless you wilfully shut your eyes, you cannot but see of what service it is both in laying the foundation of true religion, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and in raising the superstructure. You see it directs us in every point both of faith and practice: it guides us with regard to every branch both of inward and outward holiness. Do we not glory in this, that the whole of our religion is a “reasonable service?” yea, and that every part of it, when it is duly performed, is the highest exercise of our understanding?

Permit me to add a few words to you, likewise, who overvalue reason. Why should you run from one extreme to the other? Is not the middle way best? Let reason do all that reason can: employ it as far as it will go. But, at the same time, acknowledge it is utterly incapable of giving either faith, or hope, or love; and, consequently, of producing either real virtue or substan-

tial happiness. Expect these from a higher source, even from the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Seek and receive them, not as your own acquisition, but as the gift of God. Lift up your hearts to Him who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." He alone can give that faith which is "the evidence" and conviction "of things not seen." He alone can "beget you unto a lively hope" of an inheritance eternal in the heavens; and He alone can "shed his love abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost given unto you." Ask, therefore, and it shall be given unto you! Cry unto him, and you shall not cry in vain! How can you doubt? "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give the Holy Ghost unto them that ask him!" So shall you be living witnesses, that wisdom, holiness, and happiness are one; are inseparably united; and are indeed, the beginning of that eternal life which God hath given us in his Son.

HYMN.

BEHOLD the servant of the **Lord!**

I wait thy guiding eye to feel,
To hear and keep thy every word,
To prove and do thy perfect will;
Joyful from my own works to cease,
Glad to fulfil all righteousness.

Me if thy grace vouchsafe to use,
Meanest of all thy creatures, me,
The deed, the time, the manner choose;
Let all my fruit be found of thee;
Let all my works in thee be wrought,
By thee to full perfection brought.

My every weak, though good design,
O'errule, or echange, as seems thee **meet**
Jesus, let all my work be thine!
Thy work, O Lord, is all complete,
And pleasing in thy Father's sight;
Thou only hast done all things right.

Here then to thee thy own I leave;
Mould as thou wilt thy passive clay;
But let me all thy stamp receive,
But let me all thy words obey;
Serve with a single heart and **eye**,
And to thy glory live and **die**.

SERMON LXXI.

OF GOOD ANGELS.

“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”—HEB. i. 14.

1. MANY of the ancient heathens had (probably from tradition) some notion of good and evil angels. They had some conception of a superior order of beings, between men and God, whom the Greeks generally termed “demons,” (*knowing ones*,) and the Romans “genii.” Some of these they supposed to be kind and benevolent, delighting in doing good; others, to be malicious and cruel, delighting in doing evil. But their conceptions both of one and the other were crude, imperfect, and confused; being only fragments of truth, partly delivered down by their forefathers, and partly borrowed from the inspired writings.

2. Of the former, the benevolent kind, seems to have been the celebrated demon of Socrates; concerning which so many and so various conjectures have been made in succeeding ages. “This gives me notice,” said he, “every morning, of any evil which will befall me that day.” A late writer, indeed, (I suppose one that hardly believes the existence of either angel or spirit,) has published a dissertation, wherein he labours to prove that the demon of Socrates was only his reason. But it was not the manner of Socrates to speak in such obscure and ambiguous terms. If he had meant his reason, he would doubtless have said so. But this could not be his meaning: for it was impossible his reason should give him notice, every morning, of every evil which would befall him in that day. It does not lie within the province

of reason, to give such notice of future contingencies. Neither does this odd interpretation in any wise agree with the inference which he himself draws from it. "My demon," says he, "did not give me notice this morning of any evil that was to befall me to-day. Therefore I cannot regard as any evil my being condemned to die." Undoubtedly it was some spiritual being: probably one of these ministering spirits.

3. An ancient poet, one who lived several ages before Socrates, speaks more determinately on this subject. Hesiod does not scruple to say,

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth unseen."

Hence, it is probable, arose the numerous tales about the exploits of their demi-gods: *Minorum Gentium*. Hence their satyrs, fauns, nymphs of every kind; wherewith they supposed both the sea and land to be filled. But how empty, childish, unsatisfactory, are all the accounts they give of them! as, indeed, accounts that depend upon broken, uncertain tradition can hardly fail to be.

4. Revelation only is able to supply this defect: this only gives us a clear, rational, consistent account of those whom our eyes have not seen, nor our ears heard; of both good and evil angels. It is my design to speak, at present, only of the former; of whom we have a full, though brief account, in these words: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

I. 1. The question is, according to the manner of the apostle, equivalent to a strong affirmation. And hence we learn, first, that with regard to their essence, or nature, they are all spirits; not material beings; not clogged with flesh and blood like us; but having bodies, if any, not gross and earthly like ours, but of a finer substance; resembling fire or flame more than any other of these lower elements. And is not something like this intimated in those words of the Psalmist: "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire?"

(Psalm civ. 4.) As spirits, he has endued them with understanding, will, or affections, (which are indeed the same thing; as the affections are only the will exerting itself various ways,) and liberty. And are not these, understanding, will, and liberty, essential to, if not the essence of, a spirit?

2. But who of the children of men can comprehend what is the *understanding* of an angel? Who can comprehend how far their *sight* extends?—analogous to sight in men, though not the same; but thus we are constrained to speak through the poverty of human language. Probably not only over one hemisphere of the earth; yea, or

“Tenfold the length of this terrene;”

or even of the solar system; but so far as to take in one view the whole extent of the creation! And we cannot conceive any defect in their perception; neither any error in their understanding. But in what manner do they use their understanding? We must in nowise imagine that they creep from one truth to another by that slow method which we call “reasoning.” Undoubtedly they see, at one glance, whatever truth is presented to their understanding; and that with all the certainty and clearness that we mortals see the most self-evident axioms. Who then can conceive the extent of their *knowledge*? not only of the nature, attributes, and works of God, whether of creation or providence; but of the circumstances, actions, words, tempers, yea, and thoughts, of men. For, although “God” only “knows the hearts of all men,” (“unto whom are known all his works,”) together with the changes they undergo, “from the beginning of the world;” yet we cannot doubt but his angels know the hearts of those to whom they more immediately minister. Much less can we doubt of their knowing the thoughts that are in our hearts at any particular time. What should hinder their seeing them as they arise? Not the thin veil of flesh and blood. Can these intercept the view of a spirit? Nay,

“Walls within walls no more its passage bar
Than unopposing space of liquid air.”

Far more easily, then, and far more perfectly, than we can read a man's thoughts in his face, do these sagacious beings read our thoughts just as they arise in our hearts; inasmuch as they see the kindred spirit more clearly than we see the body. If this seem strange to any who had not adverted to it before, let him only consider: Suppose my spirit was out of the body, could not an angel see my thoughts, even without my uttering any words? (if words are used in the world of spirits.) And cannot that ministering spirit see them just as well now I am in the body? It seems, therefore, to be an unquestionable truth, (although perhaps not commonly observed,) that angels know not only the words and actions, but also the thoughts, of those to whom they minister. And, indeed, without this knowledge, they would be very ill qualified to perform various parts of their ministry.

3. And what an inconceivable degree of *wisdom* must they have acquired by the use of their amazing faculties, over and above that with which they were originally endued, in the course of more than six thousand years! (That they have existed so long, we are assured; for they “sang together when the foundations of the earth were laid.”) How immensely must their wisdom have increased, during so long a period, not only by surveying the hearts and ways of men in their successive generations, but by observing the works of God, his works of creation, his works of providence, his works of grace; and, above all, by “continually beholding the face of their Father which is in heaven!”

4. What measures of *holiness*, as well as wisdom, have they derived from this inexhaustible ocean!

“A boundless, fathomless abyss,
Without a bottom or a shore!”

Are they not hence, by way of eminence, styled *the holy angels*? What goodness, what philanthropy, what love to man, have they drawn from those rivers that are at

his right hand ! Such as we cannot conceive to be exceeded by any but that of God our Saviour. And they are still drinking in more love from this "fountain of living water."

5. Such is the knowledge and wisdom of the angels of God, as we learn from his own oracles. Such are their holiness and goodness. And how astonishing is their *strength* ! Even a fallen angel is styled by an inspired writer, "the prince of the power of the air." How terrible a proof did he give of this power, in suddenly raising the whirlwind which "smote the four corners of the house," and destroyed all the children of Job at once ! (Chap. i.) That this was his work, we may easily learn from the command to "save his life." But he gave a far more terrible proof of his strength, (if we suppose that "messenger of the Lord" to have been an evil angel, as is not at all improbable,) when he smote with death a hundred fourscore and five thousand Assyrians in one night ; nay, possibly in one hour, if not one moment. Yet a strength abundantly greater than this must have been exerted by that angel (whether he was an angel of light or of darkness ; which is not determined by the text) who smote, in one hour, "all the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast." For, considering the extent of the land of Egypt, the immense populousness thereof, and the innumerable cattle fed in their houses and grazing in their fruitful fields ; the men and beasts who were slain in that night must have amounted to several millions ! And if this be supposed to have been an evil angel, must not a good angel be as strong, yea, stronger than he ? For surely any good angel must have more power than even an *archangel ruined*. And what power must the "four angels" in the Revelation have, who are appointed to "keep the four winds of heaven." There seems, therefore, no extravagance in supposing that, if God were pleased to permit, any of the angels of light could heave the earth and all the planets out of their orbits ; yea, that he could arm himself with all these elements, and

rush the whole frame of nature. Indeed, we do not know how to set any bounds to the strength of these first-born children of God.

6. And although none but their great Creator is omnipresent; although none beside him can ask, "Do not [fill heaven and earth?]" yet, undoubtedly, he has given an immense sphere of action (though not unbounded) to created spirits. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia," (mentioned Dan. x. 13,) though probably an evil angel, seems to have had a sphere of action, both of knowledge and power, as extensive as that vast empire; and the same, if not greater, we may reasonably ascribe to the good angel whom he withstood for one-and-twenty days.

7. The angels of God have great power, in particular, over the human body; power either to cause or remove pain and diseases, either to kill or to heal. They perfectly well understand whereof we are made; they know all the springs of this curious machine, and can, doubtless, by God's permission, touch any of them, so as either to stop or restore its motion. Of this power, even in an evil angel, we have a clear instance in the case of Job; whom he "smote with sore boils" all over, "from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot." And in that instant, undoubtedly, he would have killed him, if God had not saved his life. And, on the other hand, of the power of angels to heal, we have a remarkable instance in the case of Daniel. There remained no "strength in me," said the prophet; "neither was there breath in me." "Then one came and touched me, and said, Peace be unto thee: be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened." (Dan. x. 17, &c.) On the other hand, when they are commissioned from above, may they not put a period to human life? There is nothing improbable in what Dr. Parnell supposes the angel to say to the hermit, concerning the death of the child:—

"To all but thee, in fits he seem'd to go:
And 'twas my ministry to deal the blow.

From this great truth, the heathen poets probably derived their imagination that Iris used to be sent down from heaven to discharge souls out of their bodies. And perhaps the sudden death of many of the children of God may be owing to the ministry of an angel.

II. So perfectly are the angels of God qualified for their high office. It remains to inquire, how they discharge their office. How do they minister to the heirs of salvation?

1. I will not say, that they do not minister at all to those who, through their obstinate impenitence and unbelief, disinherit themselves of the kingdom. This world is a world of mercy, wherein God pours down many mercies, even on the evil and the unthankful. And many of these, it is probable, are conveyed even to them by the ministry of angels; especially, so long as they have any thought of God, or any fear of God before their eyes. But it is their favourite employ, their peculiar office, to minister to the heirs of salvation; to those who are now "saved by faith," or at least seeking God in sincerity.

2. Is it not their first care to minister to our souls? But we must not expect this will be done *with observation*; in such a manner, as that we may clearly distinguish their working from the workings of our own minds. We have no more reason to look for this, than for their appearing in a visible shape. Without this, they can, in a thousand ways, apply to our understanding. They may assist us in our search after truth, remove many doubts and difficulties, throw light on what was before dark and obscure, and confirm us in the truth that is after godliness. They may warn us of evil in disguise, and place what is good in a clear, strong light. They may gently move our will to embrace what is good, and fly from that which is evil. They may many times quicken our dull affections, increase our holy hope or filial fear, assist us more ardently to love Him who has first loved us. Yea, they may be sent of God to answer that whole prayer, put into our mouths by pious Bishop Ken.

“Oh, may thy angels, while I sleep,
Around my bed their vigils keep;
Their love angelical instil,
Stop every avenue of ill!
May they celestial joys rehearse,
And thought to thought with me converse!”

Although the manner of this we shall not be able to explain while we dwell in the body.

3. May they not minister also to us, with respect to our bodies, in a thousand ways which we do not now understand? They may prevent our falling into many dangers, which we are not sensible of; and may deliver us out of many others, though we know not whence our deliverance comes. How many times have we been strangely and unaccountably preserved, in sudden and dangerous falls! And it is well if we did not impute that preservation to chance, or to our own wisdom or strength. Not so: it was God gave his angels charge over us, and in their hands they bore us up. Indeed, men of the world will always impute such deliverances to accident or second causes. To these, possibly, some of them might have imputed Daniel's preservation in the lions' den. But himself ascribes it to the true cause: “My God hath sent his angel, and shut the lions' mouths.” (Dan. vi. 22.)

4. When a violent disease, supposed incurable, is totally and suddenly removed, it is by no means improbable that this is effected by the ministry of an angel. And perhaps it is owing to the same cause, that a remedy is unaccountably suggested either to the sick person, or some attending upon him, by which he is entirely cured.

5. It seems, what are usually called “divine dreams,” may be frequently ascribed to angels. We have a remarkable instance of this kind related by one that will hardly be thought an enthusiast; for he was a heathen, a philosopher, and an emperor: I mean Marcus Antoninus. “In his ‘Meditations,’ he solemnly thanks God for revealing to him, when he was at Cajeta, in a dream, what totally cured the bloody flux; which none of his

physicians were able to heal." And why may we not suppose, that God gave him this notice by the ministry of an angel?

6. And how often does God deliver us from evil men by the ministry of his angels! overturning whatever their rage, or malice, or subtlety, had plotted against us. These are about their bed, and about their path, and privy to all their dark designs; and many of them, undoubtedly, they brought to nought, by means that we think not of. Sometimes they blast their favourite schemes in the beginning; sometimes, when they are just ripe for execution. And this they can do by a thousand means that we are not aware of. They can check them in their mid-career, by bereaving them of courage or strength; by striking faintness through their loins, or turning their wisdom into foolishness. Sometimes they bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and show us the traps that are laid for our feet. In these and various other ways, they hew the snares of the ungodly in pieces.

7. Another grand branch of their ministry is to counterwork evil angels; who are continually going about, not only as roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour, but, more dangerously still, as angels of light, seeking whom they may deceive. And how great is the number of these! Are they not as the stars of heaven for multitude? How great is their subtlety! matured by the experience of above six thousand years. How great is their strength! Only inferior to that of the angels of God. The strongest of the sons of men are but as grasshoppers before them. And what an advantage have they over us by that single circumstance, that they are invisible! As we have not strength to repel their force, so we have not skill to decline it. But the merciful Lord hath not given us up to the will of our enemies: "His eyes," that is, his holy angels, "run to and fro over all the earth." And if our eyes were opened, we should see, "they are more that are for us, than they that are against us." We should see,

“A convoy attends,
A ministering host of invisible friends.”

and whenever those assault us in soul or in body, these able, willing, ready, to defend us; who are at least equally strong, equally wise, and equally vigilant. And so can hurt us while we have armies of angels, and God of angels, on our side?

8. And we may make one general observation: whatever assistance God gives to men by men, the same, and frequently in a higher degree, he gives to them by angels. Does he administer to us by men, light when we are in darkness; joy, when we are in heaviness; deliverance, when we are in danger; ease and health, when we are sick or in pain? It cannot be doubted that he frequently conveys the same blessings by the ministry of angels: not so sensibly, indeed, but full as actually; though the messengers are not seen. Does he frequently deliver us, by means of men, from the violence and subtlety of our enemies? Many times works the same deliverance by those invisible agents. He shuts the mouths of the human lions, so that they have no power to hurt us. And frequently they join with our human friends, (although neither they nor we are sensible of it,) giving them wisdom, courage, or strength, without which all their labour for us would be unsuccessful. Thus do they secretly minister, in numberless instances, to the heirs of salvation; while we hear only the voices of men, and see none but men and about us.

9. But does not the Scripture teach, “The help which is done upon earth, God doeth it himself?” Most certainly He does. And He is able to do it by his own immediate power. He has no need of using any instruments at all, either in heaven or earth. He wants neither angels or men, to fulfil the whole counsel of his will. But it is not his pleasure so to work. He never did; and we may reasonably suppose he never will. He has always wrought by such instruments as he pleases: but still it is God himself that doeth the

work. Whatever help, therefore, we have, either by angels or men, is as much the work of God, as if he were to put forth his almighty arm, and work without any means at all. But he has used them from the beginning of the world: in all ages he has used the ministry both of men and angels. And hereby, especially, is seen "the manifold wisdom of God in the church." Meantime the same glory redounds to him, as if he used no instruments at all.

10. The grand reason why God is pleased to assist men by men, rather than immediately by himself, is undoubtedly to endear us to each other by these mutual good offices, in order to increase our happiness both in time and eternity. And is it not for the same reason that God is pleased to give his angels charge over us? namely, that he may endear us and them to each other; that by the increase of our love and gratitude to them, we may find a proportionable increase of happiness, when we meet in our Father's kingdom. In the meantime, though we may not worship them, (worship is due only to our common Creator,) yet we may "esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." And we may imitate them in all holiness; suiting our lives to the prayer our Lord himself has taught us; labouring to do his will on earth, as angels do it in heaven.

I cannot conclude this discourse better than in that admirable Collect of our church:—

"O everlasting God, who hast ordained and constituted the services of angels and men in a wonderful manner; grant that as thy holy angels alway do thee service in heaven, so by thy appointment they may succour and defend us on earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON LXXII.

OF EVIL ANGELS.

“We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places.”—EPH. vi. 12.

1. It has been frequently observed, that there are no gaps or chasms in the creation of God; but that all the parts of it are admirably connected together, to make up one universal whole. Accordingly, there is one chain of beings, from the lowest to the highest point, from an unorganized particle of earth or water, to Michael the archangel. And the scale of creatures does not advance *per saltum*, by leaps, but by smooth and gentle degrees; although it is true these are frequently imperceptible to our imperfect faculties. We cannot accurately trace many of the intermediate links of this amazing chain, which are abundantly too fine to be discerned either by our senses or understanding.

2. We can only observe, in a gross and general manner, rising one above another, first, inorganic earth; then, minerals and vegetables, in their several orders; afterwards, insects, reptiles, fishes, beasts, men, and angels. Of angels, indeed, we know nothing with any certainty but by revelation; the accounts which are left by the wisest of the ancients, or given by the modern heathens, being no better than silly, self-inconsistent fables, too gross to be imposed even upon children. But by Divine revelation we are informed, that they were all created holy and happy; yet they did not all continue as they were created: some kept, but some left, their first estate. The former of these are now good angels; the latter, evil angels. Of the former, I have spoke in

the preceding discourse : I purpose now to speak of the latter. And highly necessary it is that we should well understand what God has revealed concerning them, that they may gain no advantage over us by our ignorance ; that we may know how to wrestle against them effectually. For “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places.”

3. This single passage seems to contain the whole scriptural doctrine concerning evil angels. I apprehend the plain meaning of it, literally translated, is this : “Our wrestling,” the wrestling of real Christians, “is not” only, or chiefly, “against flesh and blood,” weak men, or fleshly appetites and passions, “but against principalities, against powers,”—the mighty princes of all the infernal regions, with their combined forces : and great is their power, as is also the power of the legions they command,—“against the rulers of the world.” (This is the literal meaning of the word.) Perhaps these principalities and powers remain chiefly in the citadel of their kingdom. But there are other evil spirits that range abroad, to whom the provinces of the world are committed,—“of the darkness,” chiefly the spiritual darkness, “of this age,” which prevails during the present state of things,—“against wicked spirits,”—eminently such ; who mortally hate and continually oppose holiness, and labour to infuse unbelief, pride, evil desire, malice, anger, hatred, envy, or revenge,—“in heavenly places ;” which were once their abode, and which they still aspire after.

In prosecuting this important subject, I will endeavour to explain,

I. The nature and properties of evil angels ; and,

II. Their employment.

I. 1. With regard to the first, we cannot doubt but all the angels of God were originally of the same nature. Unquestionably they were the highest order of created beings. They were spirits, pure ethereal creatures,

simple and incorruptible ; if not wholly immaterial, yet certainly not encumbered with gross, earthly flesh and blood. As spirits, they were endued with understanding, with affections, and with liberty, or a power of self-determination ; so that it lay in themselves, either to continue in their allegiance to God, or to rebel against him.

2. And their original properties were, doubtless, the same with those of the holy angels. There is no absurdity in supposing Satan, their chief, otherwise styled, "Lucifer, son of the morning," to have been at least one "of the first, if not the first archangel." Like the other sons of the morning, they had a height and depth of understanding quite incomprehensible to us. In consequence of this, they had such knowledge and wisdom, that the wisest of the children of men (had men then existed) would have been mere idiots in comparison of them. Their strength was equal to their knowledge ; such as it cannot enter into our heart to conceive ; neither can we conceive to how wide a sphere of action either their strength or their knowledge extended. Their number God alone can tell : doubtless it was only less than infinite. And a third part of these stars of heaven the arch-rebel drew after him.

3. We do not exactly know, (because it is not revealed in the oracles of God,) either what was the occasion of their apostasy, or what effect it immediately produced upon them. Some have, not improbably, supposed, that when God published "the decree" (mentioned Psalm ii. 6, 7) concerning the kingdom of his only-begotten Son to be over all creatures, these first-born of creatures gave place to pride, comparing themselves to him ;—possibly intimated by the very name of Satan, Lucifer, or Michael, which means, *Who is like God?* It may be, Satan, then first giving way to temptation, said in his heart, "I too will have my throne. 'I will sit upon the sides of the north ! I will be like the Most High.' " But how did the mighty then fall ! What an amazing loss did they sustain ! If we allow

of them all what our poet supposes concerning their chief in particular,—

“His form had not yet lost
All its original brightness, nor appear'd
Less than archangel ruin'd, and the excess
Of glory obscured;”

if we suppose their outward form was not entirely changed, (though it must have been in a great degree; because the evil disposition of the mind must dim the lustre of the visage,) yet what an astonishing change was wrought within when angels became devils! when the holiest of all the creatures of God became the most unholy!

4. From the time that they shook off their allegiance to God, they shook off all goodness, and contracted all those tempers which are most hateful to him, and most opposite to his nature. And ever since, they are full of pride, arrogance, haughtiness, exalting themselves above measure; and although so deeply depraved through their inmost frame, yet admiring their own perfections. They are full of envy, if not against God himself, (and even that is not impossible, seeing they formerly aspired after his throne,) yet against all their fellow-creatures; against the angels of God, who now enjoy the heaven from which they fell; and much more against those worms of the earth who are now called to “inherit the kingdom.” They are full of cruelty, of rage against all the children of men, whom they long to inspire with the same wickedness with themselves, and to involve in the same misery.

5. In the prosecution of this infernal design, they are diligent in the highest degree. To find out the most effectual means of putting it into execution, they apply to this end the whole force of their angelical understanding; and they second it with their whole strength, so far as God is pleased to permit. But it is well for mankind that God hath set them bounds which they cannot pass. He hath said to the fiercest and strongest of the apostate spirits, “Hitherto shalt thou come, and

no farther." Otherwise, how easily and how quickly might one of them overturn the whole frame of nature! How soon would they involve all in one common ruin, or, at least, destroy man from the face of the earth! And they are indefatigable in their bad work: they never are faint or weary. Indeed, it seems no spirits are capable of weariness but those that inhabit flesh and blood.

6. One circumstance more we may learn from the Scripture concerning the evil angels: they do not wander at large, but are all united under one common head. It is he that is styled by our blessed Lord, "the prince of this world:" yea, the apostle does not scruple to call him, "the god of this world." He is frequently styled "Satan," the adversary; being the great adversary both of God and man. He is termed "the devil," by way of eminence;—"Apollyon," or the destroyer;—"the old serpent," from his beguiling Eve under that form;—and, "the angel of the bottomless pit." We have reason to believe that the other evil angels are under his command; that they are ranged by him according to their several orders; that they are appointed to their several stations, and have, from time to time, their several works and offices assigned them. And, undoubtedly, they are connected (though we know not how; certainly not by love) both to him and to each other.

II. But what is the employment of evil angels? This is the second point to be considered.

1. They are (remember so far as God permits!) *κοσμοκράτορες*,—*governors of the world!* So that there may be more ground than we are apt to imagine for that strange expression of Satan, (Matt. iv. 8, 9,) when he showed our Lord "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,"—"All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." It is a little more particularly expressed in the fourth chapter of St. Luke: "The devil showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." (Such an astonishing

ing measure of power is still left in the prince of darkness!) "And the devil said, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me: and to whomsoever I will, I give it." (Verses 5, 6.) They are "the rulers of the darkness of this age;" (so the words are literally translated;) of the present state of things, during which "the whole world lieth in the wicked one." He is the element of the children of men: only those who fear God being excepted. He and his angels, in connection with and in subordination to him, dispose all the ignorance, all the error, all the folly, and particularly all the wickedness of men, in such a manner as may most hinder the kingdom of God, and most advance the kingdom of darkness.

2. "But has every man a particular evil angel, as well as a good one, attending him?" This has been an exceeding ancient opinion, both among the Christians, and the Jews before them: but it is much doubted whether it can be sufficiently proved from Scripture. Indeed, it would not be improbable that there is a particular evil angel with every man, if we were assured there is a good one. But this cannot be inferred from those words of our Lord concerning little children: "In heaven their angels do continually see the face of their Father which is in heaven." This only proves that there are angels who are appointed to take care of little children: it does not prove that a particular angel is allotted to every child. Neither is it proved by the words of Rhoda, who, hearing the voice of Peter, said, "It is his angel." We cannot infer any more from this, even suppose *his angel* means his guardian angel, than that Rhoda believed the doctrine of guardian angels, which was then common among the Jews. But still it will remain a disputable point, (seeing revelation determines nothing concerning it,) whether every man is attended either by a particular good or a particular evil angel.

3. But whether or no particular men are attended by

particular evil spirits, we know that Satan and all his angels are continually warring against us, and watching over every child of man. They are ever watching to see whose outward or inward circumstances, whose prosperity or adversity, whose health or sickness, whose friends or enemies, whose youth or age, whose knowledge or ignorance, whose business or idleness, whose joy or sorrow, may lay them open to temptation. And they are perpetually ready to make the utmost advantage of every circumstance. These skilful wrestlers espy the smallest slip we make, and avail themselves of it immediately ; as they also are "about our bed, and about our path, and spy out all our ways." Indeed each of them "walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour," or whom he may "beguile through his subtlety, as the serpent beguiled Eve." Yea, and in order to do this the more effectually, they transform themselves into angels of light. Thus,

"With rage that never ends,
Their bellish arts they try :
Legions of dire, malicious fiends,
And spirits enthroned on high."

4. It is by these instruments chiefly that the "foolish hearts" of those that know not God "are darkened : " yea, they frequently darken, in a measure, the hearts of them that do know God. The "god of this world" knows how to blind our hearts, to spread a cloud over our understanding, and to obscure the light of those truths which, at other times, shine as bright as the noon-day sun. By this means he assaults our faith, our evidence of things unseen. He endeavours to weaken that hope full of immortality to which God has begotten us ; and thereby to lessen, if he cannot destroy, our joy in God our Saviour. But, above all, he strives to damp our love of God, as he knows this is the spring of all our religion ; and that, as this rises or falls, the work of God flourishes or decays in the soul.

5. Next to the love of God, there is nothing which Satan so cordially abhors as the love of our neighbour

He uses, therefore, every possible means to prevent or destroy this; to excite either private or public suspicions, animosities, resentment, quarrels; to destroy the peace of families or of nations; and to banish unity and concord from the earth. And this, indeed, is the triumph of his art; to imbitter the poor, miserable children of men against each other, and at length urge them to do his own work, to plunge one another into the pit of destruction.

6. This enemy of all righteousness is equally diligent to hinder every good word and work. If he cannot prevail upon us to do evil, he will, if possible, prevent our doing good. He is peculiarly diligent to hinder the work of God from spreading in the hearts of men. What pains does he take to prevent or obstruct the general work of God! And how many are his devices to stop its progress in particular souls! to hinder their continuing or growing in grace, in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ! to lessen, if not destroy, that love, joy, peace,—that long-suffering, gentleness, goodness,—that fidelity, meekness, temperance,—which our Lord works by his loving Spirit in them that believe, and wherein the very essence of religion consists.

7 To effect these ends, he is continually labouring, with all his skill and power, to infuse evil thoughts of every kind into the hearts of men. And certainly it is as easy for a spirit to speak to our heart, as for a man to speak to our ears. But sometimes it is exceeding difficult to distinguish these from our own thoughts; those which he injects so exactly resembling those which naturally arise in our own minds. Sometimes, indeed, we may distinguish one from the other by this circumstance:—the thoughts which naturally arise in our minds are generally, if not always, occasioned by, or at least connected with, some inward or outward circumstance that went before. But those that are preternaturally suggested have frequently no relation to or connection (at least, none that we are able to discern,) with any thing which preceded. On the contrary, they shot

in, as it were, across, and thereby show that they are of a different growth.

8. He likewise labours to awaken evil passions or tempers in our souls. He endeavours to inspire those passions and tempers which are directly opposite to the "fruit of the Spirit." He strives to instil unbelief, atheism, ill-will, bitterness, hatred, malice, envy,—opposite to faith and love; fear, sorrow, anxiety, worldly care,—opposite to peace and joy; impatience, ill-nature, anger, resentment,—opposite to long-suffering, gentleness, meekness; fraud, guile, dissimulation,—contrary to fidelity; love of the world, inordinate affection, foolish desires,—opposite to the love of God. One sort of evil desires he may probably raise or inflame by touching the springs of this animal machine. Endeavouring thus, by means of the body, to disturb or sully the soul.

9. And, in general, we may observe that as no good is done, or spoken, or thought by any man, without the assistance of God, working together *in* and *with* those that believe in him; so there is no evil, done or spoke, or thought, without the assistance of the devil, "who worketh with energy," with strong though secret power, "in the children of unbelief." Thus he "entered into Judas," and confirmed him in the design of betraying his Master; thus he "put it in the heart" of Ananias and Sapphira "to lie unto the Holy Ghost;" and, in like manner, he has a share in all the actions and words and designs of evil men. As the children of God are "workers together with God," in every good thought, or word, or action; so the children of the devil are workers together with him, in every evil thought, or word, or work. So that as all good tempers, and remotely all good words and actions, are the fruit of the good Spirit; in like manner, all evil tempers, with all the words and works which spring from them, are the fruit of the evil spirit: insomuch that all the "works of the flesh," of our evil nature, are likewise the "work of the devil."

10. On this account, because he is continually inciting men to evil, he is emphatically called "the tempter."

Nor is it only with regard to his own children that he is thus employed: he is continually tempting the children of God also, and those that are labouring so to be.

‘ A constant watch he keeps;
He eyes them night and day;
He never slumbers, never sleeps,
Lest he should lose his prey.”

Indeed, the holiest of men, as long as they remain upon earth, are not exempt from his temptations. They cannot expect it; seeing “it is enough for the disciple to be as his Master:” and we know he was tempted to evil till he said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

11. For such is the malice of the wicked one, that he will torment whom he cannot destroy. If he cannot entice men to sin, he will, so far as he is permitted, put them to pain. There is no doubt but he is the occasion, directly or indirectly, of many of the pains of mankind, which those who can no otherwise account for them lightly pass over as nervous. And innumerable “accidents,” as they are called, are undoubtedly owing to his agency; such as the unaccountable fright or falling of horses; the overturning of carriages; the breaking or dislocating of bones; the hurt done by the falling or burning of houses,—by storms of wind, snow, rain, or hail,—by lightning or earthquakes. But to all these, and a thousand more, this subtle spirit can give the appearance of accidents; for fear the sufferers, if they knew the real agents, should call for help on One that is stronger than he.

12. There is little reason to doubt but many diseases, likewise, both of the acute and chronical kind, are either occasioned or increased by diabolical agency; particularly those that begin in an instant, without any discernible cause; as well as those that continue, and perhaps gradually increase, in spite of all the power of medicine. Here, indeed, “vain men” that “would be wise” again call in the nerves to their assistance. But is not this explaining *ignotum per ignotius*? “a thing unknown

by what is more unknown?" For what do we know of the nerves themselves? Not even whether they are solid or hollow!

13. Many years ago, I was asking an experienced physician, and one particularly eminent for curing lunacy, "Sir, have you not seen reason to believe that some lunatics are really demoniacs?" He answered, "Sir, I have been often inclined to think that most lunatics are demoniacs. Nor is there any weight in that objection, that they are frequently cured by medicine: for so might any other disease occasioned by an evil spirit, if God did not suffer him to repeat the stroke by which that disease is occasioned."

14. This thought opens to a wider scene. Who can tell how many of those diseases which we impute altogether to natural causes may be really preternatural? What disorder is there in the human frame which an evil angel may not inflict? Cannot he smite us, as he did Job, and that in a moment, with boils from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot? Cannot he with equal ease inflict any other, either external or internal malady? Could not he in a moment, by Divine permission, cast the strongest man down to the ground, and make him "wallow, foaming," with all the symptoms either of an epilepsy or apoplexy? In like manner, it is easy for him to smite any one man, or every one in a city or nation, with a malignant fever, or with the plague itself, so that vain would be the help of man.

15. But that malice blinds the eyes of the wise, one would imagine so intelligent a being would not stoop so low, as it seems the devil sometimes does, to torment the poor children of men! For to him we may reasonably impute many little inconveniences which we suffer. "I believe," (said that excellent man, the Marquis de Renty, when the bench on which he sat snapped in sunder without any visible cause,) "that Satan had a hand in it, making me to fall untowardly." I know not whether he may not have a hand in that unaccountable horror with which many have been seized in the dead

of night, even to such a degree that all their bones have shook. Perhaps he has a hand also in those terrifying dreams which many have, even while they are in perfect health.

It may be observed, in all these instances, we usually say "the devil;" as if there was one only; because these spirits, innumerable as they are, do all act in concert; and because we know not whether one or more are concerned in this or that work of darkness.

It remains only to draw a few plain inferences from the doctrine which has been delivered.

1. And, first, as a general preservative against all the rage, the power, and subtlety of your great adversary, put on the panoply, "the whole armour, of God," universal holiness. See that "the mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," and that ye "walk as Christ also walked;" that ye have a "conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." So shall ye be "able to withstand" all the force and all the stratagems of the enemy: so shall ye be able to "withstand in the evil day," in the day of sore temptation; and "having done all, to stand," to remain in the posture of victory and triumph.

2. To his "fiery darts,"—his evil suggestions of every kind, blasphemous or unclean, though numberless as the stars of heaven,—oppose "the shield of faith." A consciousness of the love of Christ Jesus will effectually quench them all.

"Jesus hath died for *you*!

What can your faith withstand?

Believe, hold fast your shield! and who

Shall pluck you from His hand?"

3. If he inject doubts whether you are a child of God, or fears lest you should not endure to the end; "take to you for a helmet the hope of salvation." Hold fast that glad word, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a living hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." You will never be overthrown, you will never be stag-

gered by your adversary, if you "hold fast the beginning of" this "confidence steadfast unto the end."

4. Whenever the "roaring lion, walking about and seeking whom he may devour," assaults you with all his malice, and rage, and strength, "resist" him "steadfast in the faith." Then is the time, having cried to the Strong for strength, to "stir up the gift of God that is in you;" to summon all your faith, and hope, and love; to turn the attack in the name of the Lord, and in the power of his might; and "he will" soon "flee from you."

5. But "there is no temptation," says one, "greater than the being without temptation." When, therefore, this is the case, when Satan seems to be withdrawn, then beware lest he hurt you more as a crooked serpent than he could do as a roaring lion. Then take care you are not lulled into a pleasing slumber; lest he should beguile you as he did Eve, even in innocence, and insensibly draw you from your simplicity toward Christ, from seeking all your happiness in Him.

6. Lastly. If he "transform himself into an angel of light," then are you in the greatest danger of all. Then have you need to beware, lest you also fall, where many mightier have been slain; then have you the greatest need to "watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." And if you continue so to do, the God whom you love and serve will deliver you. "The anointing of the Holy One shall abide with you, and teach you of all things." Your eye will pierce through snares; you shall "know what that holy and acceptable and perfect will of God is," and sha'l hold on your way, till you "grow up in all things into him that is our Head, even Christ Jesus."

SERMON LXXIII.

O F H E L L.

"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."—
MARK ix. 48.

1. EVERY truth which is revealed in the oracles of God is undoubtedly of great importance. Yet it may be allowed that some of those which are revealed therein are of greater importance than others, as being more immediately conducive to the grand end of all, the eternal salvation of men. And we may judge of their importance, even from this circumstance,—that they are not mentioned once only in the sacred writings, but are repeated over and over. A remarkable instance of this we have with regard to the awful truth which is now before us. Our blessed Lord, who uses no superfluous words, who makes no "vain repetitions," repeats it over and over in the same chapter, and, as it were, in the same breath. So, (verses 43, 44,) "If thy hand offend thee,"—if a thing or person, as useful as a hand, be an occasion of sin, and there is no other way to shun that sin,—“cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” So again, (verses 45, 46,) “If thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” And yet again, (verses 47, 48,) “If thine eye”—a person or thing as dear as thine eye—“offend thee,”—hinder thy running the race which is

set before thee,—“pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”

2. And let it not be thought, that the consideration of these terrible truths is proper only for enormous sinners. How is this supposition consistent with what our Lord speaks to those who were then, doubtless, the holiest men upon earth? “When innumerable multitudes were gathered together, he said to his disciples,” (the apostles,) “first of all, I say unto you, my friends, Fear not them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I say unto you, Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” (Luke xii. 1–5.) Yea, fear him under this very notion,—of having power to cast into hell: that is, in effect, Fear lest he should cast you into the place of torment. And this very fear, even in the children of God, is one excellent means of preserving them from it.

3. It behoves, therefore, not only the outcasts of men, but even *you, his friends*, you that fear and love God, deeply to consider what is revealed in the oracles of God concerning the future state of punishment. How widely distant is this from the most elaborate accounts which are given by the heathen authors! Their accounts are (in many particulars at least) childish, fanciful, and self-inconsistent. So that it is no wonder they did not believe themselves, but only related the tales of the vulgar. So Virgil strongly intimates, when, after the laboured account he had given of the shades beneath, he sends him that had related it out at the ivory gate, through which (as he tells us) only *dreams* pass; thereby giving us to know that all the preceding account is no more than a dream. This he only insinuates; but his brother poet, Juvenal, speaks out flat and plain,—

Esse aliquos manes, et subterranea regna,
Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum ære lavantur:

“Even our children do not believe a word of the tales concerning another world.”

4. Here, on the contrary, all is worthy of God, the Creator, the Governor of mankind. All is awful and solemn; suitable to His wisdom and justice, by whom “Tophet was ordained of old;” although originally prepared, not for the children of men, but “for the devil and his angels.”

The punishment of those who, in spite of all the warnings of God, resolve to have their portion with the devil and his angels, will, according to the ancient, and not improper, division, be either *pœna damni*,—“what they lose;” or *pœna sensûs*,—“what they feel.” After considering these separately, I shall touch on a few additional circumstances, and conclude with two or three inferences.

I. 1. And, first, let us consider the *pœna damni*,—“the punishment of loss.” This commences in that very moment wherein the soul is separated from the body; in that instant the soul loses all those pleasures, the enjoyment of which depends on the outward senses. The smell, the taste, the touch, delight no more: the organs that ministered to them are spoiled, and the objects that used to gratify them are removed far away. In the dreary regions of the dead all these things are forgotten; or, if remembered, are only remembered with pain; seeing they are gone for ever. All the pleasures of the imagination are at an end. There is no grandeur in the infernal regions; there is nothing beautiful in those dark abodes; no light but that of livid flames; and nothing new, but one unvaried scene of horror upon horror! There is no music but that of groans and shrieks; of weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth; of curses and blasphemies against God, or cutting reproaches of one another. Nor is there any thing to gratify the sense of honour: no; they are the heirs of shame and everlasting contempt.

2. Thus are they totally separated from all the things they were fond of in the present world. At the same

instant will commence another loss,—that of all the *persons* whom they loved. They are torn away from their nearest and dearest relations; their wives, husbands, parents, children: and (what to some will be worse than all this) the friend which was as their own soul. All the pleasure they ever enjoyed in these is lost, gone, vanished away: for there is no friendship in hell. Even the poet who affirms, (though I know not on what authority,)

“Devil with devil damn’d
Firm concord holds,”

does not affirm that there is any concord among the human fiends that inhabit the great abyss.

3. But they will then be sensible of a greater loss than all they have enjoyed on earth. They have lost their place in Abraham’s bosom, in the paradise of God. Hitherto, indeed, it hath not entered into their hearts to conceive what holy souls enjoy in the garden of God, in the society of angels, and of the wisest and best men that have lived from the beginning of the world; (not to mention the immense increase of knowledge which they will then undoubtedly receive;) but they will then fully understand the value of what they have vilely cast away.

4. But as happy as the souls in paradise are, they are preparing for far greater happiness. For paradise is only the porch of heaven; and it is there the spirits of just men are made perfect. It is in heaven only that there is the fulness of joy; the pleasures that are at God’s right hand for evermore. The loss of this, by those unhappy spirits, will be the completion of their misery. They will then know and feel, that God alone is the centre of all created spirits; and, consequently, that a spirit made for God can have no rest out of him. It seems that the apostle had this in his view when he spoke of those “who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.” Banishment from the presence of the Lord is the very essence of destruction to a spirit that was made for God. And

if that banishment last for ever, it is "everlasting destruction."

Such is the loss sustained by those miserable creatures, on whom that awful sentence will be pronounced: "Depart from me, ye cursed!" What an unspeakable curse, if there were no other! But, alas! this is far from being the whole: for, to the punishment of loss, will be added the punishment of sense. What they lose implies unspeakable misery, which yet is inferior to what they feel. This it is which our Lord expresses in those emphatical words: "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

II. 1. From the time that sentence was pronounced upon man, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return," it was the custom of all nations, so far as we can learn, to commit dust to dust: it seemed natural to restore the bodies of the dead to the general mother, earth. But in process of time another method obtained, chiefly among the rich and great, of burning the bodies of their relations, and frequently in a grand magnificent manner; for which purpose they erected huge funeral piles, with immense labour and expense. By either of these methods the body of man was soon restored to its parent dust. Either the worm or the fire soon consumed the well-wrought frame; after which the worm itself quickly died, and the fire was entirely quenched. But there is, likewise, a worm that belongs to the future state; and that is a worm that never dieth! and there is a fire hotter than that of the funeral pile; and it is a fire that will never be quenched!

2. The first thing intended by the worm that never dieth, seems to be a guilty conscience; including self-condemnation, sorrow, shame, remorse, and a sense of the wrath of God. May not we have some conception of this, by what is sometimes felt even in the present world? Is it not of this, chiefly, that Solomon speaks, when he says, "The spirit of a man may bear his infirmities;" his infirmities, or griefs, of any other kind; "but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Who can bear

the anguish of an awakened conscience, penetrated with a sense of guilt, and the arrows of the Almighty sticking in the soul, and drinking up the spirit? How many of the stout-hearted have sunk under it, and chose strangling rather than life! And yet what are these wounds, what is all this anguish of a soul while in this present world, in comparison of those they must suffer when their souls are wholly awakened to feel the wrath of an offended God! Add to these all unholy passions; fear, horror, rage, evil desires; desires that can never be satisfied. Add all unholy tempers; envy, jealousy, malice, and revenge; all of which will incessantly gnaw the soul, as the vulture was supposed to do the liver of Tityus. To these if we add hatred of God, and all his creatures; all these united together may serve to give us some little, imperfect idea of the worm that never dieth.

3. We may observe a remarkable difference in the manner wherein our Lord speaks concerning the two parts of the future punishment. He says, "Where *their* worm dieth not," of the one; "where *the* fire is not quenched," of the other. This cannot be by chance. What then is the reason for this variation of the expression?

Does it not seem to be this? *The fire* will be the same, essentially the same, to all that are tormented therein; only perhaps more intense to some than others, according to their degree of guilt. But *their worm* will not, cannot be the same: it will be infinitely varied, according to their various kinds, as well as degrees, of wickedness. This variety will arise partly from the just judgment of God, "rewarding every man according to his works:" for we cannot doubt but this rule will take place no less in hell than in heaven. As in heaven "every man shall receive his own reward," incommunicably his, "according to his own labours,"—that is, the whole tenor of his tempers, thoughts, words, and actions;—so, undoubtedly, every man, in fact, will receive his own bad reward according to his own bad

labour. And this, likewise, will be incommunicably *his own*, even as his labour was. Variety of punishment will likewise arise from the very nature of the thing. As they that bring most holiness to heaven will find most happiness there; so, on the other hand, it is not only true, that the more wickedness a man brings to hell, the more misery he will find there; but that this misery will be infinitely varied according to the various kinds of his wickedness. It was therefore proper to say *the fire*, in general; but *their worm* in particular.

4. But it has been questioned by some, whether there be any fire in hell; that is, any material fire. Nay, if there be any fire, it is unquestionably material. For what is immaterial fire? The same as immaterial water or earth! Both the one and the other is absolute nonsense, a contradiction in terms. Either, therefore, we must affirm it to be material, or we deny its existence. But if we granted them, there is no fire at all there, what would they gain thereby? seeing this is allowed, on all hands, that it is either fire or something worse. And consider this: does not our Lord speak as if it were real fire? No one can deny or doubt of this. Is it possible then to suppose that the God of truth would speak in this manner, if it were not so? Does he design to fright his poor creatures? What, with scarecrows? with vain shadows of things that have no being? Oh, let not any one think so! Impute not such folly to the Most High!

5. But others aver, "It is not possible that fire should burn always. For, by the immutable law of nature, it consumes whatever is thrown into it. And, by the same law, as soon as it has consumed its fuel, it is itself consumed; it goes out."

It is most true, that in the present constitution of things, during the present laws of nature, the element of fire does dissolve and consume whatever is thrown into it. But here is the mistake: the present laws of nature are not immutable. When the heavens and the

earth shall flee away, the present scene will be totally changed: and, with the present constitution of things, the present laws of nature will cease. After this great change, nothing will be dissolved, nothing will be consumed any more. Therefore, if it were true that fire consumes all things now, it would not follow that it would do the same after the whole frame of nature has undergone that vast, universal change.

6. I say, if it were true that "fire consumes all things now." But, indeed, it is not true. Has it not pleased God to give us already some proof of what will be hereafter? Is not the *linum asbestum*, the incom-bustible flax, known in most parts of Europe? If you take a towel or handkerchief made of this, (one of which may now be seen in the British Museum,) you may throw it into the hottest fire, and when it is taken out again, it will be observed, upon the nicest experiment, not to have lost one grain of its weight. Here, therefore, is a substance before our eyes, which, even in the present constitution of things, (as if it were an emblem of things to come,) may remain in fire without being consumed.

7 Many writers have spoken of other bodily torments, added to the being cast into the lake of fire. One of these, even pious Kempis, supposes that misers, for instance, have melted gold poured down their throats; and he supposes many other particular torments to be suited to men's particular sins. Nay, our great poet himself supposes the inhabitants of hell to undergo a variety of tortures; not to continue always in the lake of fire, but to be frequently,

"By harpy-footed furies, haled"

into regions of ice; and then back again through

"Extremes, by change more fierce."

But I find no word, no tittle of this, nor the least hint of it, in all the Bible. And surely this is too awful a subject to admit of such play of imagination. Let us keep to

the written word. It is torment enough to dwell with everlasting burnings.

8. This is strongly illustrated by a fabulous story, taken from one of the Eastern writers, concerning a Turkish king, who, after he had been guilty of all manner of wickedness, once did a good thing: for, seeing a poor man falling into a pit, wherein he must have inevitably perished, and kicking him from it, he saved his life. The story adds, that when, for his enormous wickedness, he was cast into hell, that foot wherewith he had saved the man's life was permitted to lie out of the flames. But allowing this to be a real case, what a poor comfort would it be! What, if both feet were permitted to lie out of the flames, yea, and both hands, how little would it avail! Nay, if all the body were taken out, and placed where no fire touched it, and only one hand or one foot kept in a burning fiery furnace; would the man, meantime, be much at ease? Nay, quite the contrary. Is it not common to say to a child, "Put your finger into that candle: can you bear it even for one minute? How then will you bear hell-fire?" Surely it would be torment enough to have the flesh burned off from only one finger. What then will it be, to have the whole body plunged into a lake of fire burning with brimstone!

III. It remains now only to consider two or three circumstances attending the never-dying worm and the unquenchable fire.

I. And, first, consider the company wherewith every one is surrounded in that place of torment. It is not uncommon to hear even condemned criminals, in our public prisons, say, "Oh, I wish I was hanged out of the way, rather than to be plagued with these wretches that are round about me!" But what are the most abandoned wretches upon earth, compared to the inhabitants of hell! None of these are, as yet, perfectly wicked, emptied of every spark of good; certainly not till this life is at an end; probably, not till the day of judgment. Nor can any of these exert, without control, their whole

wickedness on their fellow-creatures. Sometimes they are restrained by good men ; sometimes even by bad. So even the tortures in the Romish Inquisition are restrained by those that employ them, when they suppose the sufferer cannot endure any more. They then order the executioners to forbear ; because it is contrary to the rules of the house that a man should die upon the rack. And very frequently, when there is no human help, they are restrained by God, who hath set them their bounds which they cannot pass, and saith, " Hither-to shall ye come, and no farther." Yea, so mercifully hath God ordained, that the very extremity of pain causes a suspension of it. The sufferer faints away ; and so, for a time at least, sinks into insensibility. But the inhabitants of hell are perfectly wicked, having no spark of goodness remaining. And they are restrained by none from exerting to the uttermost their total wickedness. Not by *men* ; none will be restrained from evil by his companions in damnation : and not by *God* ; for He hath forgotten them, hath delivered them over to the tormentors. And the devils need not fear, like their instruments upon earth, lest they should expire under the torture. They can die no more : they are strong to sustain whatever the united malice, skill, and strength of angels can inflict upon them. And their angelic tormentors have time sufficient to vary their torments a thousand ways. How infinitely may they vary one single torment,—horrible appearances ! whereby, there is no doubt, an evil spirit, if permitted, could terrify the stoutest man upon earth to death.

2. Consider, secondly, that all these torments of body and soul are without intermission. They have no respite from pain ; but " the smoke of their torment ascendeth up day and night." *Day and night !* that is, speaking according to the constitution of the present world ; wherein God has wisely and graciously ordained that day and night should succeed each other : so that in every four-and-twenty hours there comes a

"Daily Sabbath, made to rest
Toiling man and weary beast."

Hence we seldom undergo much labour, or suffer much pain, before

"Tired nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep,"

steals upon us by insensible degrees, and brings an interval of ease. But although the damned have uninterrupted night, it brings no interruption of their pain. No sleep accompanies that darkness: whatever ancient or modern poets, either Homer or Milton, dream, there is no sleep either in hell or heaven. And be their suffering ever so extreme, be their pain ever so intense, there is no possibility of their fainting away; no, not for a moment.

Again: the inhabitants of earth are frequently diverted from attending to what is afflictive, by the cheerful light of the sun, the vicissitudes of the seasons, "the busy hum of men," and a thousand objects that roll around them with endless variety. But the inhabitants of hell have nothing to divert them from their torments, even for a moment.

"Total eclipse: no sun, no moon!"

No change of seasons, or of companions. There is no business; but one uninterrupted scene of horror, to which they must be all attention. They have no interval of inattention or stupidity: they are all eye, all ear, all sense. Every instant of their duration, it may be said of their whole frame, that they are

"Tremblingly alive all o'er,
And smart and agonize at every pore!"

3 And of this duration there is no end. What a thought is this! Nothing but eternity is the term of their torment! And who can count the drops of rain, or the sands of the sea, or the days of eternity? Every suffering is softened, if there is any hope, though distant, of deliverance from it. But here

“Hope never comes, that comes to all”

the inhabitants of the upper world! What! sufferings *never* to end!

“NEVER!—Where sinks the soul at that dread sound?
Into a gulf how dark, and how profound!”

Suppose millions of days, of years, of ages elapsed, still we are only on the threshold of eternity! Neither the pain of body nor of soul is any nearer an end than it was millions of ages ago. When they are cast into *το πῦρ, το ασβεστον*, (how emphatical! “*the fire, the unquenchable,*”) all is concluded: “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!”

Such is the account which the Judge of all gives of the punishment which he has ordained for impenitent sinners. And what a counterbalance may the consideration of this be to the violence of any temptation! in particular, to the fear of man; the very use to which it is applied by our Lord himself: “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell.” (Luke xii. 4, 5.)

What a guard may these considerations be against any temptation from pleasure! Will you lose, for any of these poor, earthly pleasures, which perish in the using, (to say nothing of the present substantial pleasures of religion,) the pleasures of paradise; such as “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into our hearts to conceive?” yea, the pleasures of heaven, the society of angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect; the conversing face to face with God your Father, your Saviour, your Sanctifier; and the drinking of those rivers of pleasure that are at God’s right hand for evermore?

Are you tempted by pain, either of body or mind? Oh, compare present things with future! What is the pain of body which you do or may endure, to that of lying in a lake of fire burning with brimstone? What is any pain of mind; any fear, anguish, sorrow, compared to

the "worm that never dieth?" *That never dieth!* This is the sting of all! As for our pains on earth, blessed be God, they are not eternal. There are some intervals to relieve, and there is some period to finish them. When we ask a friend that is sick, how he does; "I am in pain now," says he, "but I hope to be easy soon." This is a sweet mitigation of the present uneasiness. But how dreadful would his case be, if he should answer, "I am all over pain, and I shall be never eased of it! I lie under exquisite torment of body, and horror of soul; and I shall feel it *for ever!*" Such is the case of the damned sinners in hell. Suffer any pain, then, rather than come into that place of torment!

I conclude with one more reflection, taken from Dr Watts:—"It demands our highest gratitude, that we who have long ago deserved this misery, are not plunged into it. While there are thousands that have been adjudged to this place of punishment, before they had continued so long in sin as many of us have done, what an instance is it of Divine goodness, that we are not under this fiery vengeance! Have we not seen many sinners, on our right and on our left, cut off in their sins? And what but the tender mercy of God hath spared us week after week, month after month, and given us space for repentance? What shall we render unto the Lord for all his patience and long-suffering even to this day? How often have we incurred the sentence of condemnation by our repeated rebellion against God! And yet we are still alive in his presence, and are hearing the words of hope and salvation. Oh, let us look back, and shudder at the thoughts of that dreadful precipice, on the edge of which we have so long wandered! Let us fly for refuge to the hope that is set before us, and give a thousand thanks to the Divine mercy, that we are not plunged into this perdition!"

HYMN.

SHALL I,—amid a ghastly band,—
 Dragg'd to the judgment-seat,
 Far on the left with horror stand,
 My fearful doom to meet?

Dissolved are nature's closest ties,
 And bosom friends forgot,
 When God, the just Avenger, cries,
 Depart, I know you not!

But must I from his glorious face,
 From all his saints, retire?
 But must I go to my own place,
 In everlasting fire?

Ah, no:—I still may turn and live,
 For still his wrath delays;
 He now vouchsafes a kind reprieve,
 And offers me his grace.

I will accept his offers now,
 From every sin depart,
 Perform my oft-repeated vow,
 And render him my heart.

I will improve what I receive,
 The grace through Jesus given;
 Sure, if with God on earth I live,
 To live with him in heaven.

SERMON LXXIV.

OF THE CHURCH.

"I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."—EPH. iv. 1-6.

How much do we almost continually hear about the church! With many it is matter of daily conversation. And yet how few understand what they talk of! how few know what the term means! A more ambiguous word than this, *the church*, is scarce to be found in the English language. It is sometimes taken for a building, set apart for public worship; sometimes for a congregation, or body of people, united together in the service of God. It is only in the latter sense that it is taken in the ensuing discourse.

2. It may be taken indifferently for any number of people, how small or great soever. As, "where two or three are met together in his name," there is Christ; so, (to speak with St. Cyprian,) "where two or three believers are met together, there is a church." Thus it is that St. Paul, writing to Philemon, mentions "the church which was in his house;" plainly signifying, that even a Christian family may be termed "a church."

3. Several of those whom God hath called out of the world, (so the original word properly signifies,) uniting together in one congregation, formed a larger church; as "the church at Jerusalem;" that is, all those in Jerusalem whom God had so called. But considering how

swiftly these were multiplied after the day of Pentecost, it cannot be supposed that they could continue to assemble in one place; especially as they had not then any large place, neither would they have been permitted to build one. In consequence, they must have divided themselves, even at Jerusalem, into several distinct congregations. In like manner, when St. Paul, several years after, wrote to the church in Rome, (directing his letter, "To all that are in Rome, called to be saints,") it cannot be supposed that they had any one building capable of containing them all; but they were divided into several congregations, assembling in several parts of the city. /

4 The first time that the apostle uses the word "church" is in his preface to the former Epistle to the Corinthians: "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, unto the church of God which is at Corinth:" the meaning of which expression is fixed by the following words: "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus; with all that, in every place," (not Corinth only; so it was a kind of circular letter,) "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." In the inscription of his second letter to the Corinthians, he speaks still more explicitly: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints that are in all Achaia." Here he plainly includes all the churches, or Christian congregations which were in the whole province.

5. He frequently uses the word in the plural number. So, Gal. i. 2, "Paul an apostle,—unto the churches of Galatia;" that is, the Christian congregations dispersed throughout that country. In all these places, (and abundantly more might be cited,) the word church or churches means, not the buildings where the Christians assembled, (as it frequently does in the English tongue,) but the people that used to assemble there, one or more Christian congregations. But sometimes the word "church" is taken in Scripture in a still more extensive meaning, as including all the Christian congregations that are upon the face of the earth. And in this

sense we understand it in our Liturgy, when we say, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's church militant here on earth." In this sense it is unquestionably taken by St. Paul, in his exhortation to the elders of Ephesus: (Acts xx. 28 :) "Take heed to the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood." The church here, undoubtedly, means the catholic or universal church; that is, all the Christians under heaven.

6. Who those are that are properly "the church of God," the apostle shows at large, and that in the clearest and most decisive manner, in the passage above cited; wherein he likewise instructs all the members of the church how to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.

7 Let us consider, first, Who are properly the church of God? What is the true meaning of that term? "The church at Ephesus," as the apostle himself explains it, means, "the saints," the holy persons, "that are in Ephesus," and there assemble themselves together to worship God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ; whether they did this in one or (as we may probably suppose) in several places. But it is the church in general, the catholic or universal church, which the apostle here considers as one body: comprehending not only the Christians in the house of Philemon, or any one family; not only the Christians of one congregation, of one city, of one province, or nation; but all the persons upon the face of the earth, who answer the character here given. The several particulars contained therein, we may now more distinctly consider.

8. "There is one Spirit" who animates all these, all the living members of the church of God. Some understand hereby the Holy Spirit himself, the Fountain of all spiritual life; and it is certain, "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Others understand it of those spiritual gifts and holy dispositions which are afterwards mentioned.

9. "There is," in all those that have received this Spirit, "one hope;" a hope full of immortality. They know, to die is not to be lost: their prospect extends

beyond the grave. They can cheerfully say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled and that fadeth not away."

10 "There is one Lord," who has now dominion over them; who has set up his kingdom in their hearts and reigns over all those that are partakers of this hope. To obey him, to run the way of his commandments, is their glory and joy. And while they are doing this with a willing mind, they, as it were, "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus."

11. "There is one faith;" which is the free gift of God, and is the ground of their hope. This is not barely the faith of a heathen; namely, a belief that "there is a God," and that he is gracious and just, and, consequently, "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Neither is it barely the faith of a devil; though this goes much further than the former: for the devil believes, and cannot but believe, all that is written both in the Old and New Testament to be true. But it is the faith of St. Thomas, teaching him to say with holy boldness, "My Lord, and my God!" It is the faith which enables every true Christian believer to testify with St. Paul, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

12. "There is one baptism;" which is the outward sign our one Lord has been pleased to appoint, of all that inward and spiritual grace which he is continually bestowing upon his church. It is likewise a precious means, whereby this faith and hope are given to those that diligently seek him. Some, indeed, have been inclined to interpret this in a figurative sense; as if it referred to that baptism of the Holy Ghost which the apostles received at the day of Pentecost, and which, in a lower degree, is given to all believers: but it is a stated rule in interpreting Scripture, never to depart from the plain, literal sense, unless it implies an absurdity. And

besides, if we thus understood it, it would be a needless repetition, as being included in, "There is one Spirit."


13. "There is one God and Father of all" that have the Spirit of adoption, which "crieth in their hearts, Abba, Father;" which "witnesseth" continually "with their spirits," that they are the children of God: "who is above all,"—the Most High, the Creator, the Sustainer, the Governor of the whole universe: "and through all,"—pervading all space; filling heaven and earth:

Totam

Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens:—*

"and in you all,"—in a peculiar manner living in you that are one body, by one Spirit:

"Making your souls his loved abode,
The temples of indwelling God."

14. Here, then, is a clear, unexceptionable answer to that question, "What is the church?" [T]he catholic or universal church is, all the persons in the universe whom God hath so called out of the world as to entitle them to the preceding character; as to be "one body," united by "one Spirit;" having "one faith, one hope, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in them all." 

15. That part of this great body of the universal church, which inhabits any one kingdom or nation, we may properly term a National Church; as, the Church of France, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland. A smaller part of the universal church are the Christians that inhabit one city or town; as, the Church of Ephesus, and the rest of the seven churches mentioned in the Revelation. Two or three Christian believers united together are a church in the narrowest sense of the word. Such was the church in the house of Philemon, and that in the house of Nymphas, mentioned Col. iv. 15.

* The following is Warton's translation of this quotation from Virgil:—

"The general soul
Lives in the parts, and agitates the whole."—EDR.

A particular church may, therefore, consist of any number of members, whether two or three, or two or three millions. But still, whether it be larger or smaller, the same idea is to be preserved. They are one body, and have one Spirit, one Lord, one hope, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

16. This account is exactly agreeable to the nineteenth Article of our Church, the Church of England: (only the Article includes a little more than the apostle has expressed:)

“OF THE CHURCH.

“The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered.”

It may be observed, that at the same time our thirty-nine Articles were compiled and published, a Latin translation of them was published by the same authority. In this the words were *cœtus credentium*: “a congregation of believers;” plainly showing that by *faithful men*, the compilers meant, men endued with *living faith*. This brings the article to a still nearer agreement to the account given by the apostle.

But it may be doubted whether the article speaks of a particular church, or of the church universal. The title, “Of the Church,” seems to have reference to the catholic church; but the second clause of the article mentions the particular churches of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome. Perhaps it was intended to take in both; so to define the universal church as to keep in view the several particular churches of which it is composed.

17. These things being considered, it is easy to answer that question, “What is the Church of England?” It is that part, those members, of the universal church who are inhabitants of England. The Church of England is that body of men in England in whom “there is one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith;” which have “one baptism,” and “one God and Father of all.”

This, and this alone, is the Church of England, according to the doctrine of the apostle.

18. But the definition of "a church," laid down in the article, includes not only this, but much more; by that remarkable addition: "in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered." According to this definition, those congregations in which the pure word of God (a strong expression) is not preached are no parts either of the Church of England, or the church catholic; as neither are those in which the sacraments are not duly administered.

19. I will not undertake to defend the accuracy of this definition. I dare not exclude from the church catholic all those congregations in which any unscriptural doctrines, which cannot be affirmed to be "the pure word of God," are sometimes, yea, frequently, preached; neither all those congregations in which the sacraments are not "duly administered." Certainly if these things are so, the Church of Rome is not so much as a part of the catholic church; seeing therein neither is "the pure word of God" preached, nor the sacraments "duly administered." Whoever they are that have "one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all," I can easily bear with their holding wrong opinions, yea, and superstitious modes of worship: nor would I, on these accounts, scruple still to include them within the pale of the catholic church; neither would I have any objection to receive them, if they desired it, as members of the Church of England.

II. 20. We proceed now to the second point: What is it to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called?"

It should always be remembered that the word *walk*, in the language of the apostle, is of a very extensive signification. It includes all our inward and outward motions; all our thoughts, and words, and actions. It takes in, not only every thing that we do, but every thing we either speak or think. It is, therefore, no small thing "to walk," in this sense of the word, "worthy

of the vocation wherewith we are called ;” to think, speak, and act, in every instance, in a manner worthy of our Christian calling.

21. We are called to walk, first, “with all lowliness ;” to have the mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus ; not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think ; to be little, and poor, and mean, and vile in our own eyes ; to know ourselves as also we are known by Him to whom all hearts are open ; to be deeply sensible of our own unworthiness, of the universal depravity of our nature, (in which dwelleth no good thing,)—prone to all evil, averse to all good ; insomuch that we are not only sick, but dead in trespasses and sins, till God breathes upon the dry bones, and creates life by the fruit of his lips. And suppose this is done,—suppose he has now quickened us, infusing life into our dead souls ; yet how much of the carnal mind remains ! How prone is our heart still to depart from the living God ! What a tendency to sin remains in our heart, although we know our past sins are forgiven ! And how much sin, in spite of all our endeavours, cleaves both to our words and actions ! Who can be duly sensible how much remains in him of his natural enmity to God, or how far he is still alienated from God by the ignorance that is in him ?

22. Yea, suppose God has now thoroughly cleansed our heart, and scattered the last remains of sin ; yet how can we be sensible enough of our own helplessness, our utter inability to all good, unless we are every hour, yea, every moment, endued with power from on high ? Who is able to think one good thought, or to form one good desire, unless by that almighty power which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure ? We have need, even in this state of grace, to be thoroughly and continually penetrated with a sense of this. Otherwise we shall be in perpetual danger of robbing God of his honour, by glorying in something we have received, as though we had not received it.

23. When our inmost soul is thoroughly tinctured therewith, it remains that we “be clothed with humility.”

The word used by St. Peter seems to imply that we be covered with it as with a surtout; that we be all humility, both within and without; tincturing all we think, speak, and do. ✓ Let all our actions spring from this fountain; let all our words breathe this spirit; that all men may know we have been with Jesus, and have learned of him to be lowly in heart. ✓

24. And being taught of Him who was meek as well as lowly in heart, we shall then be enabled to "walk with all meekness;" being taught of Him that teacheth as rever man taught, to be meek as well as lowly in heart. ✓ This implies not only a power over anger, but over all violent and turbulent passions. It implies the having all our passions in due proportion; none of them either too strong or too weak; but all duly balanced with each other; all subordinate to reason; and reason directed by the Spirit of God. Let this equanimity govern your whole souls; that your thoughts may all flow in an even stream, and the uniform tenor of your words and actions be suitable thereto. ✓ In this "patience" you will then "possess your souls;" which are not our own while we are tossed by unruly passions. And by this all men may know that we are indeed followers of the meek and lowly Jesus. •

25. Walk with all "long-suffering." This is nearly related to meekness, but implies something more. It carries on the victory already gained over all your turbulent passions; notwithstanding all the powers of darkness, all the assaults of evil men or evil spirits. It is patiently triumphant over all opposition, and unmoved though all the waves and storms thereof go over you. Though provoked ever so often, it is still the same,—quiet and unshaken; never being "overcome of evil," but overcoming evil with good.

26. The "forbearing one another in love" seems to mean, not only the not resenting any thing, and the not avenging yourselves; not only the not injuring, hurting, or grieving each other, either by word or deed; but also the bearing one another's burdens; yea, and

lessening them by every means in our power. It implies the sympathizing with them in their sorrow, afflictions, and infirmities; the bearing them up when, without our help, they would be liable to sink under their burdens; the endeavouring to lift their sinking heads, and to strengthen their feeble knees.

27. Lastly: the true members of the church of Christ “endeavour,” with all possible diligence, with all care and pains, with unwearied patience, (and all will be little enough,) to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;” to preserve inviolate the same spirit of lowliness and meekness, of long-suffering, mutual forbearance, and love; and all these cemented and knit together by that sacred tie,—the peace of God filling the heart. Thus only can we be and continue living members of that church which is the body of Christ.

28. Does it not clearly appear from this whole account, why, in the ancient creed commonly called the apostles’, we term the universal or catholic church, “the holy catholic church?” How many wonderful reasons have been found out for giving it this appellation! One learned man informs us, “The church is called holy, because Christ, the Head of it, is holy.” Another eminent author affirms, “It is so called, because all its ordinances are designed to promote holiness,” and yet another,—“because our Lord *intended* that all the members of the church should be holy.” Nay, the shortest and the plainest reason that can be given, and the only true one, is,—The church is called *holy*, because it is holy; because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as He that called them is holy. How clear is this! If the church, as to the very essence of it, is a body of believers, no man that is not a Christian believer can be a member of it. If this whole body be animated by one Spirit, and endued with one faith, and one hope of their calling, then he who has not that Spirit, and faith, and hope, is no member of this body. It follows, that not only no common swearer, no Sabbath-breaker, no drunkard, no whoremonger, no thief, no liar,

none that lives in any outward sin, but none that is under the power of anger or pride, no lover of the world, in a word, none that is dead to God, can be a member of his church.

29 Can any thing then be more absurd, than for men to cry out, "*The Church! The Church!*" and to pretend to be very zealous for it, and violent defenders of it, while they themselves have neither part nor lot therein, nor indeed know what the church is! And yet the hand of God is in this very thing! Even in this his wonderful wisdom appears, directing their mistake to his own glory, and causing "the earth to help the woman." Imagining that they are members of it themselves, the men of the world frequently defend the church: otherwise the wolves that surround the little flock on every side would in a short time tear them in pieces. And for this very reason, it is not wise to provoke them more than is unavoidable. Even on this ground, let us, if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, "live peaceably with all men." Especially as we know not how soon God may call them too out of the kingdom of Satan into the kingdom of his dear Son.

30. In the mean time, let all those who are real members of the church see that they walk holy and unblamable in all things. "Ye are the light of the world!" Ye are "a city set upon a hill," and "cannot be hid." Oh, "let your light shine before men!" Show them your faith by your works. Let them see, by the whole tenor of your conversation, that your hope is all laid up above! Let all your words and actions evidence the spirit whereby you are animated! Above all things, let your love abound. Let it extend to every child of man: let it overflow to every child of God. By this let all men know whose disciples ye are, because you "love one another."

SERMON LXXV.

ON SCHISM.

"That there might be no schism in the body."—1 COR. xii. 25.

1. IF there be any word in the English tongue as ambiguous and indeterminate in its meaning as the word Church, it is one that is nearly allied to it,—the word Schism. It has been the subject of innumerable disputes for several hundred years ; and almost innumerable books have been written concerning it in every part of the Christian world. A very large share of these have been published in our country ; particularly during the last century, and the beginning of the present : and persons of the strongest understanding, and the most consummate learning, have exhausted all their strength upon the question, both in conversation and writing. This has appeared to be more necessary than ever, since the grand separation of the Reformed from the Romish Church. This is a charge which the members of that church never fail to bring against all that separate from her ; and which, consequently, has employed the thoughts and pens of the most able disputants on both sides. And those of each side have generally, when they entered into the field, been secure of victory ; supposing the strength of their arguments was so great, that it was impossible for reasonable men to resist them.

2. But it is observable that exceeding little good has been done by all these controversies. Very few of the warmest and ablest disputants have been able to convince their opponents. After all that could be said, the Papists are Papists, and the Protestants are Protestants still. And the same success has attended those who have so vehemently disputed about separation from the Church of England. Those who separated from her

were eagerly charged with schism; they as eagerly denied the charge; and scarce any were able to convince their opponents, either on one side or the other.

3. One great reason why this controversy has been so unprofitable, why so few of either side have been convinced, is this: they seldom agreed as to the meaning of the word concerning which they disputed: and if they did not fix the meaning of this, if they did not define the term before they began disputing about it, they might continue to dispute to their lives' end, without getting one step forward; without coming a jot nearer to each other than when they first set out.

4. Yet it must be a point of considerable importance, or St. Paul would not have spoken so seriously of it. It is, therefore, highly needful that we should consider,

I. The nature, and,

II. The evil of it.

I. 1. It is the more needful to do this, because, among the numberless books that have been written upon the subject, both by the Romanists and Protestants, it is difficult to find any that define it in a scriptural manner. The whole body of Roman Catholics define schism, a separation from the Church of Rome; and almost all our own writers define it, a separation from the Church of England. Thus both the one and the other set out wrong, and stumble at the very threshold. This will easily appear to any that calmly consider the several texts wherein the word "schism" occurs; from the whole tenor of which it is manifest that it is not a separation *from* any church, (whether general or particular, whether the catholic, or any national church,) but a separation *in* a church.

2. Let us begin with the first verse, wherein St. Paul makes use of the word. It is the tenth verse of the first chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians. The words are, "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no schisms" (the original word is *σχισματα*) "among you." Can any thing be more plain than that the schisms here spoken of were not separations *from*,

but divisions *in*, the church of Corinth? Accordingly it follows, "But that ye be perfectly united together, in the same mind and in the same judgment." You see here, that an union in mind and judgment was the direct opposite to the Corinthian schism. This, consequently, was not a separation from the church or Christian society at Corinth; but a separation in the church; a disunion in mind and judgment, (perhaps also in affection,) among those who, notwithstanding this, continued outwardly united as before.

3. Of what nature this schism at Corinth was, is still more clearly determined (if any thing can be more clear) by the words that immediately follow: "Now this I say,"—this is the schism of which I speak; you are divided into separate parties; some of you speaking in favour of one, some of another preacher,—“Every one of you saith,” (verse 12,) “I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas,” or Peter. Who then does not see that the schism for which the apostle here reproves the Corinthians is neither more nor less than the splitting into several parties, as they gave the preference to one or another preacher. And this species of schism there will be occasion to guard against in every religious community.

4. The second place where the apostle uses this word is in the eighteenth verse of the eleventh chapter of this Epistle: “When ye come together in the church,” the Christian congregation, “I hear that there are divisions” (the original word here also is *σχίσματα*, *schisms*) “among you.” But what were these schisms? The apostle immediately tells you: (verse 20 :) “When you come together,” professing your design is “to eat of the Lord’s supper, every one of you taketh before another his own supper,” as if it were a common meal. What then was the schism? It seems, in doing this, they divided into little parties, which cherished anger and resentment one against another, even at that solemn season.

5. May it not be observed, (to make a little digression here, for the sake of those who are troubled with needless scruples on this head,) that the sin which the apostle

charges on the communicants at Corinth in this chapter is usually quite misunderstood? It was precisely this, and nothing else, "the taking one before another his own supper;" and in such a shocking manner, that while "one was hungry, another was drunken." By doing this, he says, "ye eat and drink" (not "*damnation*;" a vile mistranslation of the word, but) *judgment*, temporal judgment, "to yourselves;" which sometimes shortened their lives. "For this cause"—for sinning in this vile manner—"many are sick and weak among you." Observe here two things: First, What was the sin of the Corinthians? Mark it well, and remember it. It was *taking one before another his own supper*; so that while *one was hungry, another was drunken*. Secondly, What was the punishment? It was bodily weakness and sickness; which, without repentance, might end in death. But what is this to *you*? You cannot commit *their* sin: therefore, you cannot incur their punishment.

6. But to return. It deserves to be seriously remarked, that in this chapter the apostle uses the word "heresies" as exactly equivalent with the word "schisms." "I hear," says he, (verse 18,) "that there are schisms among you, and I partly believe it:" he then adds, (verse 19,) "For there must be heresies" (another word for the same thing) "among you, that they which are approved among you may be made manifest." As if he had said, "The wisdom of God permits it so to be, for this end,—for the clear manifestation of those whose heart is right with him." This word, therefore, (*heresy*), which has been so strangely distorted for many centuries, as if it meant erroneous opinions, opinions contrary to the faith delivered to the saints,—which has been made a pretence for destroying cities, depopulating countries, and shedding seas of innocent blood,—has not the least reference to opinions, whether right or wrong. It simply means, wherever it occurs in Scripture, divisions, or parties, in a religious community.

7 The third and the only remaining place in this Epistle, wherein the apostle uses this word, is the twenty-fifth

verse of the twelfth chapter; where, speaking of the church, (he seems to mean the church universal, the whole body of Christ,) he observes, "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body:" (verses 24, 25 :) he immediately fixes the meaning of his own words: "But that the members might have the same care one for another: and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." We may easily observe that the word "schism" here means the want of this tender care for each other. It undoubtedly means an alienation of affection in any of them toward their brethren; a division of heart, and parties springing therefrom, though they were still outwardly united together; though they still continued members of the same external society.

8. But there seems to be one considerable objection against the supposing heresy and schism to mean the same thing. It is said, St. Peter, in the second chapter of his Second Epistle, takes the word "heresies" in a quite different sense. His words are, (verse 1,) "There shall be among you false teachers, who will bring in damnable," or destructive, "heresies, denying the Lord that bought them." But it does by no means appear that St. Peter here takes the word "heresies" in any other sense than St. Paul does. Even in this passage it does not appear to have any reference to opinions, good or bad. Rather it means, They will "bring in," or occasion, destructive parties or sects, (so it is rendered in the common French translation,) who "deny the Lord that bought them:" such sects now swarm throughout the Christian world.

9. I shall be thankful to any one who will point to me any other place in the inspired writings, where this word schism is to be found. I remember only these three. And it is apparent to every impartial reader, that it does not, in any of these, mean a separation from any church or body of Christians, whether with or without cause.

So that the immense pains which have been taken both by Papists and Protestants, in writing whole volumes against schism, as a separation, whether from the church of Rome, or from the Church of England, exerting all their strength, and bringing all their learning, have been employed to mighty little purpose. They have been fighting with shadows of their own raising; violently combating a sin which had no existence but in their own imagination; which is not once forbidden, no, nor once mentioned, either in the Old or New Testament.

10. "But is there no sin resembling what so many learned and pious writers have termed 'schism,' and against which all the members of religious communities have need to be carefully guarded?" I do not doubt but there is; and I cannot tell, whether this, too, may not, in a remote sense, be called schism: I mean, "a causeless separation from a body of living Christians." There is no absurdity in taking the word in this sense, though it be not strictly scriptural. And it is certain all the members of Christian communities should be carefully guarded against it. For how little a thing soever it may seem, and how innocent soever it may be accounted, schism, even in this sense, is both evil in itself, and productive of evil consequences.

11. It is evil in itself. To separate ourselves from a body of living Christians, with whom we were before united, is a grievous breach of the law of love. It is the nature of love to unite us together; and the greater the love, the stricter the union. And while this continues in its strength, nothing can divide those whom love has united. It is only when our love grows cold, that we can think of separating from our brethren. And this is certainly the case with any who willingly separate from their Christian brethren. The pretences for separation may be innumerable, but want of love is always the real cause; otherwise they would still hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is therefore contrary to all those commands of God, wherein brotherly love is enjoined to that of St. Paul, "Let brotherly love continue;"—tha

of St. John, "My beloved children, love one another;"—and especially to that of our blessed Master, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." Yea, "by this," saith he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

12. And as such a separation is evil in itself, being a breach of brotherly love, so it brings forth evil fruit: it is naturally productive of the most mischievous consequences. It opens a door to all unkind tempers, both in ourselves and others. It leads directly to a whole train of evil surmisings, to severe and uncharitable judging of each other. It gives occasion to offence, to anger and resentment, perhaps in ourselves as well as in our brethren; which, if not presently stopped, may issue in bitterness, malice, and settled hatred; creating a present hell wherever they are found, as a prelude to hell eternal.

13. But the ill consequences of even this species of schism do not terminate in the heart. Evil tempers cannot long remain within, before they are productive of outward fruit. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. As he whose heart is full of love openeth his mouth with wisdom, and in his lips there is the law of kindness; so he whose heart is full of prejudice, anger, suspicion, or any unkind temper, will surely open his mouth in a manner corresponding with the disposition of his mind. And hence will arise, if not lying and slandering, (which yet will hardly be avoided,) bitter words, talebearing, backbiting, and evil speaking of every kind.

14. From evil words, from talebearing, backbiting, and evil speaking, how many evil works will naturally flow! Anger, jealousy, envy, wrong tempers of every kind, do not vent themselves merely in words, but push men continually to all kind of ungodly and unrighteous actions. A plentiful harvest of all the works of darkness may be expected to spring from this source; whereby, in the end, thousands of souls, and not a few of those who once walked in the light of God's countenance, may be turned from the way of peace, and finally drowned in everlasting perdition.

15. Well might our blessed Lord say, "Wo unto the world because of offences!" Yet, "it must needs be, that offences will come:" yea, abundance of them will, of necessity, arise, when a breach of this sort is made in any religious community; while they that leave it endeavour to justify themselves, by censuring those they separate from; and these, on the other hand, retort the charge, and strive to lay the blame on them. But how mightily does all this altercation grieve the Holy Spirit of God! How does it hinder his mild and gentle operations in the souls both of one and the other! Heresies and schisms (in the scriptural sense of those words) will, sooner or later, be the consequence; parties will be formed, on one and the other side, whereby the love of many will wax cold. The hunger and thirst after righteousness, after either the favour or the full image of God, together with the longing desires wherewith so many were filled of promoting the work of God in the souls of their brethren, will grow languid, and, as offences increase, will gradually die away. And as the "fruit of the Spirit" withers away, "the works of the flesh" will again prevail, to the utter destruction, first of the power, and then of the very form, of religion. These consequences are not imaginary, are not built on mere conjectures, but on plain matter of fact. This has been the case again and again within these last thirty or forty years: these have been the fruits which we have seen over and over, to be consequent on such a separation.

16. And what a grievous stumbling-block must these things be to those who are without, to those who are strangers to religion, who have neither the form nor the power of godliness! How will they triumph over these once eminent Christians! How boldly ask, "What are they better than we?" How will they harden their hearts more and more against the truth, and bless themselves in their wickedness! from which, possibly, the example of the Christians might have reclaimed them, had they continued unblamable in their behaviour. Such is the complicated mischief which persons separating from

a Christian church or society do, not only to themselves, but to that whole society, and to the world in general.

17 But perhaps such persons will say, "We did not do this willingly; we were constrained to separate from that society, because we could not continue therein with a clear conscience; we could not continue without sin. I was not allowed to continue therein without breaking a commandment of God." If this was the case, you could not be blamed for separating from that society. Suppose, for instance, you were a member of the Church of Rome, and you could not remain therein without committing idolatry; without worshipping of idols, whether images, or saints and angels; then it would be your bounden duty to leave that community, totally to separate from it. Suppose you could not remain in the Church of England without doing something which the word of God forbids, or omitting something which the word of God positively commands; if this were the case, (but, blessed be God, it is not,) you ought to separate from the Church of England. I will make the case my own: I am now, and have been from my youth, a member and a minister of the Church of England: and I have no desire nor design to separate from it, till my soul separates from my body. Yet if I was not permitted to remain therein without omitting what God requires me to do, it would then become meet, and right, and my bounden duty, to separate from it without delay. To be more particular: I know God has committed to me a dispensation of the gospel; yea, and my own salvation depends upon preaching it: "Wo is me if I preach not the gospel." If then, I could not remain in the church without omitting this, without desisting from preaching the gospel, I should be under a necessity of separating from it, or losing my own soul. In like manner, if I could not continue united to any smaller society, church, or body of Christians, without committing sin, without lying and hypocrisy, without preaching to others doctrines which I did not myself believe, I should be under an absolute necessity of separating from that society. And in all

these cases, the sin of separation, with all the evils consequent upon it, would not lie upon me, but upon those who constrained me to make that separation, by requiring of me such terms of communion as I could not in conscience comply with. But, setting aside this case, suppose the church or society to which I am now united does not require me to do any thing which the Scripture forbids, or to omit any thing which the Scripture enjoins, it is then my indispensable duty to continue therein. And if I separate from it without any such necessity, I am justly chargeable (whether I foresaw them or not) with all the evils consequent upon that separation.

18. I have spoke the more explicitly upon this head, because it is so little understood; because so many of those who profess much religion, nay, and really enjoy a measure of it, have not the least conception of this matter, neither imagine such a separation to be any sin at all. They leave a Christian society with as much unconcern as they go out of one room into another. They give occasion to all this complicated mischief, and wipe their mouth, and say they have done no evil! Whereas they are justly chargeable, before God and man, both with an action that is evil in itself, and with all the evil consequences which may be expected to follow, to themselves, to their brethren, and to the world.

19. I entreat you, therefore, my brethren, all that fear God, and have a desire to please him, all that wish to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man, think not so slightly of this matter, but consider it calmly. Do not rashly tear asunder the sacred ties which unite you to any Christian society. This indeed is not of so much consequence to *you* who are only a *nominal* Christian. For you are not now vitally united to any of the members of Christ. Though you are called a Christian, you are not really a member of any Christian church. But if you are a living member, if you live the life that is hid with Christ in God, then take care how you rend the body of Christ by separating from your brethren. It is a thing evil in itself. It is

sore evil in its consequences. Oh, have pity upon yourself! Have pity on your brethren! Have pity even upon the world of the ungodly! Do not lay more stumbling-blocks in the way of these for whom Christ died.

20. But if you are afraid, and that not without reason, of schism, improperly so called, how much more afraid will you be, if your conscience is tender, of schism in the proper scriptural sense! Oh, beware, I will not say of *forming*, but of *countenancing* or *abetting*, any *parties* in a Christian society! Never encourage, much less cause, either by word or action, any division therein. In the nature of things, "there must be heresies," divisions, "among you;" but keep thyself pure. Leave off contention before it be meddled with: shun the very beginning of strife. Meddle not with them that are given to dispute, with them that love contention. I never knew that remark to fail: "He that loves to dispute, does not love God." Follow peace with all men, without which you cannot effectually follow holiness. Not only "seek peace," but "ensue it:" if it seem to flee from you, pursue it nevertheless. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

21. Happy is he that attains the character of a peacemaker in the church of God. Why should not you labour after this? Be not content, not to stir up strife; but do all that in you lies, to prevent or quench the very first spark of it. Indeed, it is far easier to prevent the flame from breaking out, than to quench it afterwards. However, be not afraid to attempt even this: the God of peace is on your side. He will give you acceptable words, and will send them to the heart of the hearers. *Noli diffidere; noli discedere*, says a pious man: *fac quod in te est; et Deus aderit bonæ tuæ voluntati*: "Do not distrust Him that has all power, that has the hearts of all men in his hand. Do what in thee lies; and God will be present, and bring thy good desires to good effect." Never be weary of well doing: in due time thou shalt reap, if thou faint not.

SERMON LXXVI.

ON PERFECTION.

"Let us go on unto perfection."—HEB. vi. 1.

THE whole sentence runs thus : "Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection : not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God ;" which he had just before termed "the first principles of the oracles of God," and "meat fit for babes," for such as have just tasted that the Lord is gracious.

That the doing of this is a point of the utmost importance, the apostle intimates in the next words : "This will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and have fallen away, to renew them again to repentance." As if he had said, If we do not "go on to perfection," we are in the utmost danger of "falling away ;" and if we do fall away, it is "impossible," that is, exceeding hard, "to renew us again to repentance."

In order to make this very important scripture as easy to be understood as possible, I shall endeavour,

I. To show what perfection is ;

II. To answer some objections to it ; and,

III. To expostulate a little with the opposers of it.

I. I will endeavour to show what perfection is.

1. And, first, I do not conceive the perfection here spoken of, to be the perfection of angels. As those glorious beings never "left their first estate," never declined from their original perfection, all their native faculties are unimpaired : their understanding, in parti-

cular, is still a lamp of light, their apprehension of all things clear and distinct, and their judgment always true. Hence, though their knowledge is limited, (for they are creatures,) though they are ignorant of innumerable things, yet they are not liable to mistake; their knowledge is perfect in its kind. And as their affections are all constantly guided by their unerring understanding, so that all their actions are suitable thereto; so they do, every moment, not their own will, but the good and acceptable will of God. Therefore it is not possible for man, whose understanding is darkened, to whom mistake is as natural as ignorance; who cannot think at all, but by the mediation of organs which are weakened and depraved, like the other parts of his corruptible body; it is not possible, I say, for man always to think right, to apprehend things distinctly, and to judge truly of them. In consequence hereof, his affections, depending on his understanding, are variously disordered. And his words and actions are influenced, more or less, by the disorder both of his understanding and affections. It follows, that no man, while in the body, can possibly attain to angelic perfection.

2. Neither can any man, while he is in a corruptible body, attain to Adamic perfection. Adam, before his fall, was undoubtedly as pure, as free from sin, as even the holy angels. In like manner, his understanding was as clear as theirs, and his affections as regular. In virtue of this, as he always judged right, so he was able always to speak and act right. But since man rebelled against God, the case is widely different with him. He is no longer able to avoid falling into innumerable mistakes; consequently, he cannot always avoid wrong affections; neither can he always think, speak, and act right. Therefore man, in his present state, can no more attain Adamic than angelic perfection.

3. The highest perfection which man can attain, while the soul dwells in the body, does not exclude ignorance, and error, and a thousand other infirmities. Now, from wrong judgments, wrong words and actions

will often necessarily flow: and, in some cases, wrong affections also may spring from the same source. I may judge wrong of you; I may think more or less highly of you than I ought to think; and this mistake in my judgment may not only occasion something wrong in my behaviour, but it may have a still deeper effect; it may occasion something wrong in my affection. From a wrong apprehension, I may love and esteem you either more or less than I ought. Nor can I be freed from a liableness to such a mistake, while I remain in a corruptible body. A thousand infirmities, in consequence of this, will attend my spirit, till it returns to God who gave it. And, in numberless instances, it comes short of doing the will of God as Adam did in paradise. Hence the best of men may say from the heart,

“Every moment, Lord, I need
The merit of thy death,”

for innumerable violations of the Adamic as well as the angelic law.” It is well, therefore, for us, that we are not now under these, but under the law of love. “Love is” now “the fulfilling of the law,” which is given to fallen man. This is now, with respect to us, “the perfect law.” But even against this, through the present weakness of our understanding, we are continually liable to transgress. Therefore every man living needs the blood of atonement, or he could not stand before God.

4. What is then the perfection of which man is capable while he dwells in a corruptible body? It is the complying with that kind command, “My son, give me thy heart.” It is the “loving the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind.” This is the sum of Christian perfection: it is all comprised in that one word, Love. The first branch of it is the love of God: and as he that loves God loves his brother also, it is inseparably connected with the second, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:” Thou shalt love every man as thy own soul, as

Christ loved us. "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets:" these contain the whole of Christian perfection.

5. Another view of this is given us in those words of the great apostle: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." For although this immediately and directly refers to the humility of our Lord, yet it may be taken in a far more extensive sense, so as to include the whole disposition of his mind, all his affections, all his tempers, both toward God and man. Now, it is certain that as there was no evil affection in him, so no good affection or temper was wanting. So that "whatsoever things are holy, whatsoever things are lovely," are all included in "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

6. St. Paul, when writing to the Galatians, places perfection in yet another view. It is the one undivided *fruit of the Spirit*, which he describes thus: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity," (so the word should be translated here,) "meekness, temperance." What a glorious constellation of graces is here! Now, suppose all these things to be knit together in one, to be united together in the soul of a believer, this is Christian perfection.

7. Again: he writes to the Christians at Ephesus, of "putting on the new man, which is created after God, in righteousness and true holiness;" and to the Colossians, of "the new man renewed after the image of him that created him;" plainly referring to the words in Genesis, (i. 27,) "So God created man in his own image." Now, the moral image of God consists (as the apostle observes) "in righteousness and true holiness." By sin this is totally destroyed. And we never can recover it, till we are "created anew in Christ Jesus." And this is perfection.

8. St. Peter expresses it in a still different manner, though to the same effect: "As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Pet. i. 15.) According to this apostle, then, per-

fection is another name for universal holiness : inward and outward righteousness : holiness of life, arising from holiness of heart.

9. If any expressions can be stronger than these, they are those of St. Paul to the Thessalonians : (1 Epistle v. 23 :) "The God of peace himself sanctify you wholly ; and may the whole of you, the spirit, the soul, and the body," (this is the literal translation,) "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

10. We cannot show this sanctification in a more excellent way, than by complying with that exhortation of the apostle : "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies" (yourselves, your souls and bodies ; a part put for the whole, by a common figure of speech) "a living sacrifice unto God ;" to whom ye were consecrated many years ago in baptism. When what was then devoted is actually presented to God, then is the man of God perfect.

11. To the same effect St. Peter says, (1 Epistle ii. 5.) "Ye are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." But what sacrifices shall we offer now, seeing the Jewish dispensation is at an end ? If you have truly presented yourselves to God, you offer up to him continually all your thoughts, and words, and actions, through the Son of his love, as a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving.

12. Thus you experience that He whose name is called JESUS does not bear that name in vain : that he does, in fact, "save his people from their sins ;" the root, as well as the branches. And this salvation from sin, from all sin, is another description of perfection ; though indeed it expresses only the least, the lowest branch of it, only the negative part of the great salvation.

II. I proposed, in the second place, to answer some objections to this scriptural account of perfection.

1. One common objection to it is, that there is no promise of it in the word of God. If this were so, we must give it up ; we should have no foundation to build

upon : for the promises of God are the only sure foundation of our hope. But surely there is a very clear and full promise that we shall all love the Lord our God with all our hearts. So we read, (Deut. xxx. 6,) "Then will I circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Equally express is the word of our Lord, which is no less a promise, though in the form of a command : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matt. xxii. 37.) No words can be more strong than these ; no promise can be more express. In like manner, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is as express a promise as a command.

2. And indeed that general and unlimited promise, which runs through the whole gospel dispensation, "I will put my laws in their minds, and write them in their hearts," turns all the commands into promises ; and, consequently, that among the rest, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." The command here is equivalent to a promise, and gives us full reason to expect that he will work in us what he requires of us.

3. With regard to the fruit of the Spirit, the apostle, in affirming, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance," does, in effect, affirm that the Holy Spirit actually works love, and these other tempers, in those that are led by him. So that here also we have firm ground to tread upon ; this scripture likewise being equivalent to a promise, and assuring us that all these shall be wrought in us, provided we are led by the Spirit.

4. And when the apostle says to the Ephesians, (iv. 21-24,) "Ye have been taught, as the truth is in Jesus,"—to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind," and to "put on the new man, which is created after God,"—that is, after the image of God,— "in righteousness and true holiness," he leaves us no room to doubt, but God will thus "renew us in the spirit of our mind,"

and "create us anew" in the image of God, wherein we were at first created : otherwise it could not be said, that this is "the truth as it is in Jesus."

5. The command of God, given by St. Peter, "Be ye holy, as he that hath called you is holy, in all manner of conversation," implies a promise that we shall be thus holy, if we are not wanting to ourselves. Nothing can be wanting on God's part : as he has called us to holiness, he is undoubtedly willing, as well as able, to work this holiness in us. For he cannot mock his helpless creatures, calling us to receive what he never intends to give. That he does call us thereto, is undeniable ; therefore he will give it, if we are not disobedient to the heavenly calling.

6. The prayer of St. Paul for the Thessalonians, that God would "sanctify" them throughout, and "that the whole of them, the spirit, the soul, and the body, might be preserved blameless," will undoubtedly be heard in behalf of all the children of God, as well as of those at Thessalonica. Hereby, therefore, all Christians are encouraged to expect the same blessing from "the God of peace;" namely, that they also shall be "sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body;" and that "the whole of them shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

7. But the great question is, whether there is any promise in Scripture, that we shall be *saved from sin*. Undoubtedly there is. Such is that promise, (Psalm cxxx. 8,) "He shall redeem Israel from all his sins;" exactly answerable to those words of the angel, "He shall save his people from their sins." And surely "he is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God through him." Such is that glorious promise given through the prophet Ezekiel: (xxxvi. 25-27 :) "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of you

flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Such (to mention no more) is that pronounced by Zacharias, (Luke i. 73-75,) "The oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies," (and such, doubtless, are all our sins,) "to serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." The last part of this promise is peculiarly worthy of our observation. Lest any should say, "True, we shall be saved from our sins when we die," that clause is remarkably added, as if on purpose to obviate this pretence, *all the days of our life*. With what modesty then can any one affirm, that none shall enjoy this liberty *till death*.

8. "But," say some, "this cannot be the meaning of the words; for the thing is impossible." It is impossible to men: but the things impossible with men are possible with God. "Nay, but this is impossible in its own nature: for it implies a contradiction, that a man should be saved from all sin while he is in a sinful body."

There is a great deal of force in this objection. And perhaps we allow most of what you contend for. We have already allowed, that while we are in the body we cannot be wholly free from mistake. Notwithstanding all our care, we shall still be liable to judge wrong in many instances. And a mistake in judgment will very frequently occasion a mistake in practice. Nay, a wrong judgment may occasion something in the temper or passions which is not strictly right. It may occasion needless fear or ill-grounded hope, unreasonable love or unreasonable aversion. But all this is no way inconsistent with the perfection above described.

9. You say, "Yes, it is inconsistent with the last article: it cannot consist with salvation from sin." I answer, It will perfectly well consist with salvation from sin, according to that definition of sin, (which I apprehend to be the scriptural definition of it,) *a voluntary*

transgression of a known law. "Nay, but all transgressions of the law of God, whether voluntary or involuntary, are sin: for St. John says, '*All sin is a transgression of the law.*'" True, but he does not say, *All transgression of the law is sin.* This I deny: let him prove it that can.

To say the truth, this is a mere strife of words. You say none is saved from sin in *your* sense of the word; but I do not admit of that sense, because the word is never so taken in Scripture. And you cannot deny the possibility of being saved from sin in *my* sense of the word. And this is the sense wherein the word sin is over and over taken in Scripture.

"But surely we cannot be saved from sin, while we dwell in a *sinful body.*" *A sinful body?* I pray observe, how deeply ambiguous, how equivocal, this expression is! But there is no authority for it in Scripture: the word *sinful body* is never found there. And as it is totally unscriptural, so it is palpably absurd. For no *body*, or matter of any kind, can be *sinful*: spirits alone are capable of sin. Pray in what part of the body should sin lodge? It cannot lodge in the skin, nor in the muscles, or nerves, or veins, or arteries; it cannot be in the bones, any more than in the hair or nails. Only the soul can be the seat of sin.

10. "But does not St. Paul himself say, '*They that are in the flesh cannot please God.*'" I am afraid the sound of these words has deceived many unwary souls, who have been told, Those words, *they that are in the flesh*, mean the same as *they that are in the body.*" No; nothing less. *The flesh*, in this text, no more means *the body* than it does *the soul.* Abel, Enoch, Abraham, yea, all that cloud of witnesses recited by St. Paul in the eleventh of the Hebrews, did actually please God while they were in the body, as he himself testifies. The expression, therefore, here means neither more nor less than they that are unbelievers, they that are in their natural state, they that are without God in the world.

11. But let us attend to the reason of the thing. Why cannot the Almighty sanctify the soul while it is in the body? Cannot he sanctify *you* while you are in this house, as well as in the open air? Can the walls of brick or stone hinder him? No more can these walls of flesh and blood hinder him a moment from sanctifying you throughout. He can just as easily save you from all sin in the body as out of the body.

"But has he promised thus to save us from sin while we are in the body?" Undoubtedly he has: for a promise is implied in every commandment of God; consequently in that, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." For this and every other commandment is given, not to the dead, but to the living. It is expressed in the words above recited, that we should walk "in holiness before him all the days of our life."

I have dwelt the longer on this, because it is the grand argument of those that oppose salvation from sin; and also, because it has not been so frequently and so fully answered: whereas the arguments taken from Scripture have been answered a hundred times over.

12. But a still more plausible objection remains, taken from experience; which is, that there are no living witnesses of this salvation from sin. In answer to this, I allow,

(1.) That they are not many. Even in this sense, there are *not many fathers*. Such is our hardness of heart, such our slowness to believe what both the prophets and apostles have spoke, that there are few, exceeding few, true witnesses of the great salvation.

(2.) I allow that there are false witnesses, who either deceive their own souls, and speak of the things they know not, or "speak lies in hypocrisy." And I have frequently wondered, that we have not more of both sorts. It is nothing strange that men of warm imaginations should deceive themselves in this matter. Many do the same with regard to justification: they imagine

they are justified, and are not. But though many imagine it falsely, yet there are some that are truly justified. And thus, though many imagine they are sanctified, and are not, yet there are some that are really sanctified.

(3.) I allow that some who once enjoyed full salvation have now totally lost it. They once walked in glorious liberty, giving God their whole heart, "rejoicing evermore, praying without ceasing, and in every thing giving thanks." But it is past. They now are shorn of their strength, and become like other men. Yet perhaps they do not give up their confidence; they still have a sense of his pardoning love. But even this is frequently assaulted by doubts and fears, so that they hold it with a trembling hand.

13. "Nay, this," say some pious and sensible men, "is the very thing which we contend for. We grant, it may please God to make some of his children for a time unspeakably holy and happy. We will not deny, that they may enjoy all the holiness and happiness which you speak of. But it is only *for a time*: God never designed that it should continue to their lives' end. Consequently, sin is only suspended: it is not destroyed."

This you affirm. But it is a thing of so deep importance, that it cannot be allowed without clear and cogent proof. And where is the proof? We know that, in general, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He does not repent of any gifts which he hath bestowed upon the children of men. And how does the contrary appear, with regard to this particular gift of God? Why should we imagine that he will make an exception with respect to the most precious of all his gifts on this side heaven? Is he not as able to give it us always, as to give it once? as able to give it for fifty years, as for one day? And how can it be proved that he is not willing to continue this his loving kindness? How is this supposition, that he is not willing, consistent with the positive assertion of the

apostle? who, after exhorting the Christians at Thessalonica, and in them all Christians in all ages, to “rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks,”—immediately adds, (as if on purpose to answer those who denied, not the *power*, but the *will* of God to work in them,) “For this is the will of God concerning you in Christ Jesus.” Nay, and it is remarkable, that, after he had delivered that glorious promise, (such it properly is,) in the twenty-third verse, “The very God of peace shall sanctify you wholly: and the whole of you,” (so it is in the original,) “the spirit, the soul, and the body, shall be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ;” he adds again, “Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it.” He *will*, not only sanctify you wholly, but will preserve you in that state until he comes to receive you unto himself.

14. Agreeably to this is the plain matter of fact. Several persons have enjoyed this blessing, without any interruption, for many years. Several enjoy it at this day. And not a few have enjoyed it unto their death, as they have declared with their latest breath; calmly witnessing that God had saved them from all sin till their spirit returned to God.

15. As to the whole of the objections taken from experience, I desire it may be observed further, either the persons objected to have attained Christian perfection, or they have not. If they have not, whatever objections are brought against them strike wide of the mark. For they are not the persons we are talking of: therefore, whatever they are or do is beside the question. But if they have attained it, if they answer the description given under the nine preceding articles, no reasonable objection can lie against them. They are superior to all censure; and “every tongue that riseth up against them will they utterly condemn.”

16. “But I never saw one,” continues the objector, “that answered my idea of perfection.” It may be so. And it is probable (as I observed elsewhere) you never

will. For your idea includes abundantly too much; even freedom from those infirmities which are not separable from a spirit that is connected with flesh and blood. But if you keep to the account that is given above, and allow for the weakness of human understanding, you may see at this day undeniable instances of genuine, scriptural perfection.

III. 1. It only remains, in the third place, to expostulate a little with the opposers of this perfection.

Now, permit me to ask, Why are you so angry with those who profess to have attained this? and so mad (I cannot give it any softer title) against Christian perfection?—against the most glorious gift which God ever gave to the children of men upon earth? View it in every one of the preceding points of light, and see what it contains that is either odious or terrible; that is calculated to excite either hatred or fear in any reasonable creature.

What rational objection can you have to the loving the Lord your God with all your heart? Why should you be afraid of it? Would it do you any hurt? Would it lessen your happiness, either in this world or the world to come? And why should you be unwilling that others should give him their whole heart? or that they should love their neighbours as themselves?—yea, “as Christ hath loved us?” Is this detestable? Is it the proper object of hatred? Or is it the most amiable thing under the sun? Is it proper to move terror? Is it not rather desirable in the highest degree?

2. Why are you so averse to having in you the whole “mind which was in Christ Jesus?”—all the affections, all the tempers and dispositions, which were in him while he dwelt among men? Why should you be afraid of this? Would it be any worse for you, were God to work in you this very hour all the mind that was in him? If not, why should you hinder others from seeking this blessing? or be displeased at those who think they have attained it? Is any thing more

lovely? any thing more to be desired by every child of man?

3. Why are you averse to having the whole "fruit of the Spirit?"—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, meekness, gentleness, fidelity, goodness, temperance?" Why should you be afraid of having all these planted in your inmost soul? As "against these there is no law," so there cannot be any reasonable objection. Surely nothing is more desirable than that all these tempers should take deep root in your heart; nay, in the hearts of all that name the name of Christ; yea, of all the inhabitants of the earth.

4. What reason have you to be afraid of, or to entertain any aversion to, the being "renewed in the" whole "image of him that created you?" Is not this more desirable than any thing under heaven? Is it not consummately amiable? What can you wish for in comparison of this, either for your own soul, or for those for whom you entertain the strongest and tenderest affection? And when you enjoy this, what remains but to be "changed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord?"

5. Why should you be averse to universal holiness,—the same thing under another name? Why should you entertain any prejudice against this, or look upon it with apprehension? whether you understand by that term the being inwardly conformed to the whole image and will of God, or an outward behaviour in every point suitable to that conformity. Can you conceive any thing more amiable than this? any thing more desirable? Set prejudice aside, and surely you will desire to see it diffused over all the earth.

6. Is perfection (to vary the expression) the being "sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul, and body?" What lover of God and man can be averse to this, or entertain frightful apprehensions of it? Is it not, in your best moments, your desire to be all of a piece?—all consistent with yourself?—all faith, all meekness, all love? And suppose you were once possessed of

this glorious liberty, would not you wish to continue therein?—to be preserved “blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?”

7. For what cause should you that are children of God, be averse to, or afraid of, presenting yourselves, your souls and bodies, as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God?—to God your Creator, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier? Can any thing be more desirable than this entire self-dedication to him? And is it not your wish that all mankind should unite in this “reasonable service?” Surely no one can be averse to this, without being an enemy to all mankind.

8. And why should you be afraid of, or averse to, what is naturally implied in this; namely, the offering up all our thoughts, and words, and actions, as a spiritual sacrifice to God, acceptable to him through the blood and intercession of his well-beloved Son? Surely you cannot deny that this is good and profitable to men, as well as pleasing to God. Should you not then devoutly pray that both you and all mankind may thus worship him in spirit and in truth?

9. Suffer me to ask one question more. Why should any man of reason and religion be either afraid of, or averse to, salvation from all sin? Is not sin the greatest evil on this side hell? And if so, does it not naturally follow, that an entire deliverance from it is one of the greatest blessings on this side heaven? How earnestly, then, should it be prayed for by all the children of God! By sin, I mean *a voluntary transgression of a known law*. Are you averse to being delivered from this? Are you afraid of such a deliverance? Do you then love sin, that you are so unwilling to part with it? Surely no. You do not love either the devil or his works: you rather wish to be totally delivered from them; to have sin rooted out both of your life and your heart.

10. I have frequently observed, and not without surprise, that the opposers of perfection are more vehement against it when it is placed in this view, than in

any other whatsoever. They will allow all you say of the love of God and man ; of the mind which was in Christ ; of the fruit of the Spirit ; of the image of God ; of universal holiness ; of entire self-dedication ; of sanctification in spirit, soul, and body ; yea, and of the offering up of all our thoughts, words, and actions, as a sacrifice to God ;—all this they will allow so we will allow sin, a little sin, to remain in us till death.

11. Pray compare this with that remarkable passage in John Bunyan's "Holy War." "When Immanuel," says he, "had driven Diabolus and all his forces out of the city of Mansoul, Diabolus preferred a petition to Immanuel, that he might have only a small part of the city. When this was rejected, he begged to have only a little room within the walls." But Immanuel answered, he should have no place in it all ; no, not to rest the sole of his foot.

Had not the good old man forgot himself? Did not the force of truth so prevail over him here as utterly to overturn his own system?—to assert perfection in the clearest manner? For if this is not salvation from sin, I cannot tell what is.

12. "No," says a great man, "this is the error of errors: I hate it from my heart. I pursue it through all the world with fire and sword." Nay, why so vehement? Do you seriously think there is no error under heaven equal to this? Here is something which I cannot understand. Why are those that oppose salvation from sin (few excepted) so eager,—I had almost said furious? Are you fighting *pro aris et focis*? "for God and your country?" for all you have in the world? for all that is near and dear unto you? for your liberty, your life? In God's name, why are you so fond of sin? What good has it ever done you? what good is it ever likely to do you, either in this world, or in the world to come? And why are you so violent against those that hope for a deliverance from it? Have patience with us, if we are in error; yea, suffer us to enjoy our error. If we should not attain it, the very expectation of this deliverance

gives us present comfort ; yea, and ministers strength to resist those enemies which we expect to conquer. If you could persuade us to despair of that victory, we should give over the contest. Now “we are saved by hope :” from this very hope a degree of salvation springs. Be not angry at those who are *felices errore suo*, “happy in their mistake.” Else, be their opinion right or wrong, your temper is undeniably sinful. Bear then, with *us*, as we do with *you* ; and see whether the Lord will not deliver us ; whether he is not able, yea, and willing, “to save them to the uttermost that come unto God through him.”

HYMN.

O God, most merciful and true ;
 Thy nature to my soul impart ;
 'Stablish with me the cov'nant new,
 And write perfection on my heart.

To real holiness restored,
 O let me gain my Saviour's mind !
 And, in the knowledge of my Lord,
 Fulness of life eternal find.

Remember, Lord, my sins no more,
 That them I may no more forget ;
 But, sunk in guiltless shame, adore,
 With speechless wonder, at thy feet.

O'erwhelm'd with thy stupendous grace,
 I shall not in thy presence move ;
 But breathe unutterable praise,
 And rapturous awe, and silent love.

Then every murmuring thought and vain
 Expires, in sweet confusion lost :
 I cannot of my cross complain ;
 I cannot of my goodness boast.

Pardon'd for all that I have done,
 My mouth as in the dust I hide ;
 And glory give to God alone,
 My God for ever pacified !

SERMON LXXVII.

SPIRITUAL WORSHIP.

"This is the true God, and eternal life."—1 JOHN v. 20.

1. IN this Epistle, St. John speaks not to any particular church, but to all the Christians of that age; although more especially to them among whom he then resided. And in them he speaks to the whole Christian church in all succeeding ages.

2. In this letter, or rather tract, (for he was present with those to whom it was more immediately directed, probably being not able to preach to them any longer, because of his extreme old age,) he does not treat directly of faith, which St. Paul had done; neither of inward and outward holiness, concerning which both St. Paul, St. James, and St. Peter had spoken; but of the foundation of all,—the happy and holy communion which the faithful have with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

3. In the preface, he describes the authority by which he wrote and spoke, (i. 1-4,) and expressly points out the design of his present writing. To the preface exactly answers the conclusion of the Epistle, more largely explaining the same design, and recapitulating the marks of our communion with God, by "*we know*," thrice repeated. (v. 18-20.)

4. The tract itself treats,

First, severally, of communion with the Father; (i. 5-10;) of communion with the Son; (ii. and iii.) of communion with the Spirit. (iv.)

Secondly, conjointly, of the testimony of the Father;

Son, and Holy Ghost; on which faith in Christ, the being born of God, love to God and his children, the keeping his commandments, and victory over the world, are founded. (v. 1-12.)

5. The recapitulation begins, (v. 18,) "We know that he who is born of God," who sees and loves God, "sinneth not," so long as this loving faith abideth in him. "We know we are of God;" children of God, by the witness and the fruit of the Spirit; "and the whole world," all who have not the Spirit, "lieth in the wicked one." They are, and live, and dwell in him, as the children of God do in the Holy One. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us" a spiritual "understanding, that we may know the true One," the faithful and true witness. "And we are in the true One," as branches in the vine. "This is the true God, and eternal life."

In considering these important words, we may inquire,

I. How is he the true God?

II. How is he eternal life? I shall then,

III. Add a few inferences.

I. 1. And, first, we may inquire, How is he the true God? He is "God over all, blessed for ever." "He was with God," with God the Father, "from the beginning," from eternity; "and was God. He and the Father are One;" and, consequently, "he thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Accordingly, the inspired writers give him all the titles of the most high God. They call him over and over, by the incommunicable name, JEHOVAH,—never given to any creature. They ascribe to him all the attributes and all the works of God. So that we need not scruple to pronounce him, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God: in glory equal with the Father, in majesty co-eternal."

2. He is the true God, the only Cause, the sole Creator of all things. "By him," saith the apostle Paul, "were created all things that are in heaven, and that are on earth,"—yea, earth and heaven themselves—but the inhabitants are named, because more noble than

the house,—“visible and invisible.” The several species of which are subjoined: “Whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers.” So St. John: “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” And, accordingly, St. Paul applies to him those strong words of the Psalmist: “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands.”

3. And as the true God, he is also the Supporter of all the things that he hath made. He beareth, upholdeth, sustaineth, all created things by the word of his power, by the same powerful word which brought them out of nothing. As this was absolutely necessary for the beginning of their existence, it is equally so for the continuance of it: were his almighty influence withdrawn, they could not subsist a moment longer. Hold up a stone in the air: the moment you withdraw your hand, it naturally falls to the ground. In like manner, were he to withdraw his hand for a moment, the creation would fall into nothing.

4. As the true God, he is likewise the Preserver of all things. He not only keeps them in being, but preserves them in that degree of well-being which is suitable to their several natures. He preserves them in their several relations, connections, and dependencies, so as to compose one system of beings, to form one entire universe, according to the counsel of his will. How strongly and beautifully is this expressed: *Τα πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνεστηκε*,—“By whom all things consist;” or, more literally, “By and in him are all things compacted into one system!” He is not only the support, but also the cement, of the whole universe.

5. I would particularly remark, (what perhaps has not been sufficiently observed,) that he is the true Author of all the *motion* that is in the universe. To spirits, indeed, he has given a small degree of self-moving power, but not to matter. All matter, of whatever kind it be, is absolutely and totally inert. It does not, cannot, in

any case, move itself; and whenever any part of it seems to move, it is in reality moved by something else. See that log, which, vulgarly speaking, *moves* on the sea! It is in reality *moved* by the water. The water is moved by the wind; that is, a current of air. And the air itself owes all its motion to the ethereal fire, a particle of which is attached to every particle of it. Deprive it of that fire, and it moves no longer; it is fixed; it is as inert as sand. Remove fluidity (owing to the ethereal fire intermixed with it) from water, and it has no more motion than the log. Impact fire into iron, by hammering it when red-hot, and it has no more motion than fixed air, or frozen water. But when it is unfixed, when it is in its most active state, what gives motion to fire? The very heathen will tell you. It is

Totam

Mens agitans molem, et magno se corpore miscens.*

6. To pursue this a little further: we say, the moon moves round the earth; the earth and the other planets move round the sun; the sun moves round its own axis. But these are only vulgar expressions; for, if we speak the truth, neither the sun, moon, nor stars *move*. None of these move themselves: they are all *moved* every moment by the almighty hand that made them.

"Yes," says Sir Isaac, "the sun, moon, and all the heavenly bodies do move, do gravitate, toward each other." *Gravitate!* What is that? "Why, they all *attract* each other in proportion to the quantity of matter they contain." "Nonsense all over," says Mr. Hutchinson; "jargon, self-contradiction. Can any thing *act* where it is not? No; they are continually *impelled* toward each other." *Impelled!* by what? "By the subtile matter, the ether, or electric fire." But remember! be it ever so subtile, it is matter still: consequently, it is as inert in itself as either sand or marble. It can-

* The following is Warton's translation of this quotation from Virgil:—

"The general soul
Lives in the parts, and agitates the whole."—EDIT.

not, therefore, move itself; but probably it is the first material mover, the main spring whereby the Creator and Preserver of all things is pleased to move the universe.

7 The true God is also the Redeemer of all the children of men. It pleased the Father to lay upon him the iniquities of us all, that by the one oblation of himself once offered, when he tasted death for every man, he might make a full and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

8. Again: the true God is the Governor of all things: "His kingdom ruleth over all." The government rests upon his shoulder throughout all ages. He is the Lord and Disposer of the whole creation, and every part of it. And in how astonishing a manner does he govern the world! How far are his ways above human thought! How little do we know of his methods of government! Only this we know, *Ita præsidet singulis sicut universis, et universis sicut singulis!* "Thou presidest over each creature, as if it were the universe; and over the universe, as over each individual creature." Dwell a little upon this sentiment. What a glorious mystery does it contain! It is paraphrased in the words recited above:

"Father, how wide thy glories shine,
Lord of the universe—and mine!
Thy goodness watches o'er the whole,
As all the world were but one soul;
Yet keeps my every sacred hair,
As I remain'd thy single care!"

9. And yet there is a difference, as was said before, in his providential government over the children of men. A pious writer observes, There is a threefold circle of Divine providence. The *outermost circle* includes all the sons of men; heathens, Mohammedans, Jews, and Christians. He causeth his sun to rise upon all. He giveth them rain and fruitful seasons. He pours ten thousand benefits upon them, and fills their hearts with food and gladness. With an *interior circle* he encompasses the whole visible Christian church, all that name the name of Christ. He has an additional regard

to these, and a nearer attention to their welfare. But the *innermost circle* of his providence encloses only the invisible church of Christ; all real Christians, wherever dispersed in all corners of the earth; all that worship God (whatever denomination they are of) in spirit and in truth. He keeps these as the apple of an eye: he hides them under the shadow of his wings. And it is to these in particular that our Lord says, "Even the hairs of your head are all numbered."

10. Lastly, being the true God, he is the End of all things; according to that solemn declaration of the apostle, (Rom. xi. 36,) "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:" *of him*, as the Creator,—*through him*, as the Sustainer and Preserver,—and *to him*, as the ultimate End of all.

II. In all these senses Jesus Christ is the true God. But how is he eternal life?

1. The thing directly intended in this expression is not, that he *will be* eternal life: although this is a great and important truth, and never to be forgotten. "He is the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." He is the Purchaser of that "crown of life" which will be given to all that are "faithful unto death;" and he will be the soul of all their joys to all the saints in glory.

"The flame of angelical love
Is kindled at Jesus's face;
And all the enjoyment above
Consists in the rapturous gaze!"

2. The thing directly intended is not, that he is the resurrection; although this also is true, according to his own declaration, "I am the resurrection and the life:" agreeable to which are St. Paul's words, "As in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." So that we may well say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

3. But waiving what he *will be* hereafter, we are here called to consider what he *is now*. He is now the Life of every thing that lives, in any kind or degree. He is the source of the lowest species of life, that of *vegetables*, as being the source of all the motion on which vegetation depends. He is the fountain of the life of *animals*; the power by which the heart beats, and the circulating juices flow. He is the fountain of all the life which man possesses in common with other animals. And if we distinguish the *rational* from the animal life, he is the source of this also.

4. But how infinitely short does all this fall of the life which is here directly intended, and of which the apostle speaks so explicitly in the preceding verses! (11, 12 :) "This is the testimony, that God hath given us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life,"—the eternal life here spoken of,—“and he that hath not the Son” of God “hath not” this “life.” As if he had said, “This is the sum of the testimony which God hath testified of his Son, that God hath given us, not only a title to, but the real beginning of, eternal life: and this life is purchased by, and treasured up in, his Son; who has all the springs and the fulness of it in himself, to communicate to his body, the church.”

5. This eternal life then commences when it pleases the Father to reveal his Son in our hearts; when we first know Christ, being enabled to “call him Lord by the Holy Ghost;” when we can testify, our conscience bearing us witness in the Holy Ghost, “The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” And then it is that happiness begins; happiness real, solid, substantial. Then it is that heaven is opened in the soul, that the proper heavenly state commences, while the love of God, as loving us, is shed abroad in the heart, instantly producing love to all mankind; general, pure benevolence, together with its genuine fruits, lowliness, meekness, patience, contentedness in every state; an entire,

clear, full acquiescence in the whole will of God; enabling us to "rejoice evermore, and in every thing to give thanks."

6. As our knowledge and our love of him increase, by the same degrees, and in the same proportion, the kingdom of an inward heaven must necessarily increase also; while we "grow up in all things into him who is our Head." And when we are *ἐν αὐτῷ πεπληρωμένοι*, *complete in him*, as our translators render it; but more properly, when we are *filled with him*; when "Christ in us, the hope of glory," is our God and our all; when he has taken the full possession of our heart; when he reigns therein without a rival, the Lord of every motion there; when we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us; then we are completely happy; then we live "all the life that is hid with Christ in God;" then, and not till then, we properly experience what that word meaneth, "God is love; and whosoever dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."

III. I have now only to add a few inferences from the preceding observations.

1. And we may learn from hence, first, that as there is but one God in heaven above and in the earth beneath; so there is only one happiness for created spirits, either in heaven or earth. This one God made our heart for himself; and it cannot rest till it resteth in him. It is true, that while we are in the vigour of youth and health; while our blood dances in our veins; while the world smiles upon us, and we have all the conveniences, yea, and superfluities of life, we frequently have pleasing dreams, and enjoy a kind of happiness. But it cannot continue; it flies away like a shadow; and even while it lasts, it is not solid or substantial; it does not satisfy the soul. We still pant after something else, something which we have not. Give a man every thing that this world can give, still, as Horace observed near two thousand years ago,—

Curtæ nescio quid semper abest rei.

Still,

“Amidst our plenty, something still,
To me, to thee, to him is wanting!”

That *something* is neither more nor less than the knowledge and love of God; without which no spirit can be happy either in heaven or earth.

2. Permit me to recite my own experience, in confirmation of this:—I distinctly remember, that, even in my childhood, even when I was at school, I have often said, “They say the life of a school-boy is the happiest in the world: but I am sure I am not happy; for I am not content, and so cannot be happy.” When I had lived a few years longer, being in the vigour of youth, a stranger to pain and sickness, and particularly to lowness of spirits; (which I do not remember to have felt one quarter of an hour ever since I was born;) having plenty of all things, in the midst of sensible and amiable friends, who loved me, and I loved them; and being in the way of life which, of all others, suited my inclinations; still I was not happy. I wondered why I was not, and could not imagine what the reason was. The reason certainly was, I did not know God; the source of present as well as eternal happiness. What is a clear proof that I was not then happy, is, that, upon the coolest reflection, I knew not one week which I would have thought it worth while to have lived over again; taking it with every inward and outward sensation, without any variation at all.

3. But a pious man affirms, “When I was young, I was happy; though I was utterly without God in the world.” I do not believe you: though I doubt not but you believe yourself. But you are deceived, as I have been over and over. Such is the condition of human life!

“Flow’rets and myrtles fragrant seem to rise:
All is at distance fair; but, near at hand,
The gay deceit mocks the desiring eyes
With thorns, and desert heath, and barren sand.”

Look forward on any distant prospect: how beautiful

does it appear! Come up to it; and the beauty vanishes away, and it is rough and disagreeable. Just so is life. But when the scene is past, it resumes its former appearance; and we seriously believe, that we were then very happy, though, in reality, we were far otherwise. For as none is now, so none ever was, happy, without the loving knowledge of the true God.

4. We may learn hence, secondly, that this happy knowledge of the true God is only another name for religion; I mean Christian religion; which, indeed, is the only one that deserves the name. Religion, as to the nature or essence of it, does not lie in this or that set of notions, vulgarly called *faith*; nor in a round of duties, however carefully *reformed* from error and superstition. It does not consist in any number of outward actions. No: it properly and directly consists in the knowledge and love of God, as manifested in the Son of his love, through the eternal Spirit. And this naturally leads to every heavenly temper, and to every good word and work.

5. We learn, hence, thirdly, that none but a Christian is happy; none but a real inward Christian. A glutton, a drunkard, a gamester, may be *merry*; but he cannot be happy. The beau, the belle, may eat and drink, and rise up to play; but still they feel they are not happy. Men or women may adorn their own dear persons with all the colours of the rainbow. They may dance, and sing, and hurry to and fro, and flutter hither and thither. They may roll up and down in their splendid carriages, and talk insipidly to each other. They may hasten from one diversion to another: but happiness is not there. They are still "walking in a vain shadow, and disquieting themselves in vain." One of their own poets has truly pronounced, concerning the whole life of these sons of pleasure,

"'Tis a dull farce, an empty show;
Powder, and pocket-glass, and beau."

I cannot but observe of that fine writer, that he came

near the mark, and yet fell short of it. In his "Solomon," (one of the noblest poems in the English tongue,) he clearly shows where happiness *is not*; that it is not to be found in natural knowledge, in power, or in the pleasures of sense or imagination. But he does not show where it is to be found. He could not; for he did not know it himself. Yet he came near it when he said,

"Restore, Great Father, thy instructed son;
And in my act may thy great will be done!"

6. We learn, hence, fourthly, that every Christian is happy; and that he who is not happy is not a Christian. If, as was observed above, religion is happiness, every one that has it must be happy. This appears from the very nature of the thing; for if religion and happiness are in fact the same, it is impossible that any man can possess the former, without possessing the latter also. He cannot have religion without having happiness; seeing they are utterly inseparable.

And it is equally certain, on the other hand, that he who is not happy is not a Christian: seeing, if he was a real Christian, he could not but be happy. But I allow an exception here in favour of those who are under violent temptation; yea, and of those who are under deep nervous disorders, which are, indeed a species of insanity. The clouds and darkness which then overwhelm the soul suspend its happiness; especially if Satan is permitted to second those disorders, by pouring in his fiery darts. But, excepting these cases, the observation will hold, and it should be well attended to,—Whoever is not happy, yea, happy in God, is not a Christian.

7. Are not *you* a living proof of this? Do not you still wander to and fro, seeking rest, but finding none?—pursuing happiness, but never overtaking it? And who can blame you for pursuing it? It is the very end of your being. The great Creator made nothing to be miserable, but every creature to be happy in its kind. And upon a general review of the works of his hands, he

pronounced them all *very good*; which they would not have been, had not every intelligent creature, yea, every one capable of pleasure and pain, been happy in answering the end of its creation. If *you* are now unhappy, it is because you are in an unnatural state: and shall you not sigh for deliverance from it? "The whole creation," being now "subject to vanity," "groaneth and travaileth in pain together." I blame you only, or pity you rather, for taking a wrong way to a right end; for seeking happiness where it never was, and never can be, found. You seek happiness in your fellow-creatures, instead of your Creator. But these can no more make you happy than they can make you immortal. If you have ears to hear, every creature cries aloud, "Happiness is not in me." All these are, in truth, "broken cisterns, that can hold no water." Oh, turn unto your rest! Turn to Him in whom are hid all the treasures of happiness! Turn unto him "who giveth liberally unto all men;" and he will give you "to drink of the water of life freely."

8. You cannot find your long-sought happiness in all the pleasures of the world. Are they not "deceitful upon the weights?" Are they not lighter than vanity itself? How long will ye "feed upon that which is not bread?"—which may amuse, but cannot satisfy? You cannot find it in the religion of the world; either in opinions, or a mere round of outward duties. Vain labour! Is not God a Spirit, and therefore to be "worshipped in spirit and in truth?" In this alone can you find the happiness you seek; in the union of your spirit with the Father of spirits; in the knowledge and love of Him who is the fountain of happiness, sufficient for all the souls he has made.

9. But where is he to be found? Shall we go up into heaven, or down into hell, to seek him? Shall we "take the wings of the morning," and search for him "in the uttermost parts of the sea?" Nay, *quod petis, hic est!* What a strange word to fall from the pen of a heathen! "What you seek is here!" He is "about your bed."

He is "about your path." He "besets you behind and before." He "lays his hand upon you." Lo! God is here! not far off. Now, believe and feel him near! May he now reveal himself in your heart! Know him, love him, and you are happy!

10. Are you already happy in him? Then see that you "hold fast whereunto ye have attained!" "Watch and pray," that you may never be "moved from your steadfastness." "Look unto yourselves, that ye lose not what ye have gained, but that ye receive a full reward." In so doing, expect a continual growth in grace, in the loving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Expect that the power of the Highest shall suddenly overshadow you, that all sin may be destroyed, and nothing may remain in your heart, but holiness unto the Lord. And this moment, and every moment, "present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God," and "glorify him with your body and with your spirit, which are God's!"

SERMON LXXVIII.

ON SPIRITUAL IDOLATRY.

“*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*”—1 JOHN V. 21.

1. THERE are two words that occur several times in this Epistle—*παιδια* and *τεκνια*—both of which our translators render by the same expression, *little children*. But their meaning is very different. The former is very properly rendered *little children*; for it means, *babes in Christ*,—those that have lately tasted of his love, and are, as yet, weak and unestablished therein. The latter might with more propriety be rendered *beloved children*; as it does not denote any more than the affection of the speaker to those whom he had begotten in the Lord.

2. An ancient historian relates, that when the apostle was so enfeebled by age as not to be able to preach, he was frequently brought into the congregation in his chair, and just uttered, “Beloved children, love one another.” He could not have given a more important advice. And equally important is this which lies before us; equally necessary for every part of the church of Christ: “Beloved children, keep yourselves from idols.”

3. Indeed there is a close connection between them: one cannot subsist without the other. As there is no firm foundation for the love of our brethren except the love of God, so there is no possibility of loving God except we keep ourselves from idols.

But what are the idols of which the apostle speaks? This is the first thing to be considered. We may then, in the second place, inquire, How shall we keep ourselves from them?

I. 1. We are, first, to consider, What are the idols of which the apostle speaks? I do not conceive him to

mean, at least not principally, the idols that were worshipped by the heathens. They to whom he was writing, whether they had been Jews or heathens, were not in much danger from these. There is no probability that the Jews now converted had ever been guilty of worshipping them: as deeply given to this gross idolatry as the Israelites had been for many ages, they were hardly ever entangled therein after their return from the Babylonish captivity. From that period, the whole body of Jews had shown a constant, deep abhorrence of it: and the heathens, after they once turned to the living God, had their former idols in the utmost detestation. They abhorred to touch the unclean thing; yea, they chose to lay down their lives rather than turn to the worship of those gods whom they now knew to be devils.

2. Neither can we reasonably suppose, that he speaks of those idols that are now worshipped in the church of Rome; whether angels, or the souls of departed saints, or images of gold, silver, wood, or stone. None of these idols were known in the Christian church till some centuries after the time of the apostles. Once, indeed, St. John himself "fell down to worship before the face of an angel" that spake unto him; probably mistaking him, from his glorious appearance, for the Great Angel of the Covenant; but the strong reproof of the angel, which immediately followed, secured the Christians from imitating that bad example: "See thou do it not. As glorious as I appear, I am not thy Master. I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets: worship God." (Rev. xxii. 9.)

3. Setting, then, pagan and Romish idols aside, what are those of which we are here warned by the apostle? The preceding words show us the meaning of these. "This is the true God,"—the end of all the souls he has made, the centre of all created spirits;—"and eternal life,"—the only foundation of present as well as eternal happiness. To him, therefore, alone, our heart is due. And he cannot, he will not, quit his claim, or consent

to its being given to any other. He is continually saying to every child of man, "My son, give me thy heart!" And to give our heart to any other is plain idolatry. Accordingly, whatever takes our heart from him, or shares it with him, is an idol; or, in other words, whatever we seek happiness in, independent of God.

4. Take an instance that occurs almost every day: A person who has been long involved in the world, surrounded and fatigued with abundance of business, having at length acquired an easy fortune, disengages himself from all business, and retires into the country,—to be happy. Happy in what? Why in taking his ease. For he intends now,

Somno et inertibus horis
Ducere sollicitæ jucunda oblivia vitæ.

"To sleep, and pass away
In gentle inactivity the day?"

Happy in eating and drinking whatever his heart desires: perhaps more elegant fare than that of the old Roman, who feasted his imagination before the treat was served up; who, before he left the town, consoled himself with the thought of "fat bacon, and cabbage too!"

Uncta satis pingui ponentur olusecula lardo!

Happy,—in altering, enlarging, rebuilding, or at least decorating, the old mansion-house he has purchased; and likewise in improving every thing about it; the stables, out-houses, grounds. But, meantime, where does God come in? Nowhere at all. He did not think about him. He no more thought of the King of heaven, than of the king of France. God is not in his plan. The knowledge and love of God are entirely out of the question. Therefore this whole scheme of happiness in retirement is idolatry, from beginning to end.

5. If we descend to particulars, the first species of this idolatry is what St. John terms *the desire of the flesh*. We are apt to take this in too narrow a meaning, as if it related to one of the senses only. Not so: this expression equally refers to all the outward senses. It

means the seeking happiness in the gratification of any or all of the external senses; although more particularly of the three lower senses,—tasting, smelling, and feeling. It means, the seeking happiness herein, if not in a gross, indelicate manner, by open intemperance, by gluttony, or drunkenness, or shameless debauchery; yet, in a regular kind of epicurism; in a genteel sensuality; in such an elegant course of self-indulgence as does not disorder either the head or the stomach; as does not at all impair our health or blemish our reputation.

6. But we must not imagine this species of idolatry is confined to the rich and great. In this also “the toe of the peasant” (as our poet speaks) “treads upon the heel of the courtier.” Thousands in low as well as in high life sacrifice to this idol; seeking their happiness (though in a more humble manner) in gratifying their outward senses. It is true, their meat, their drink, and the objects that gratify their other senses, are of a coarser kind. But still they make up all the happiness they either have or seek, and usurp the hearts which are due to God.

7. The second species of idolatry mentioned by the apostle is, *the desire of the eye*: that is the seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination; (chiefly by means of the eyes;) that internal sense, which is as natural to men as either sight or hearing. This is gratified by such objects as are either grand, or beautiful, or uncommon. But as to grand objects, it seems they do not please any longer than they are new. Were we to survey the pyramids of Egypt daily for a year, what pleasure would they then give? Nay, what pleasure does a far grander object than these,—

“The ocean rolling on the shelly shore,”

give to one who has been long accustomed to it? Yea, what pleasure do we generally receive from the grandest object in the universe,—

“Yon ample, azure sky,
Terribly large, and wonderfully bright,
With stars unnumber’d, and unmeasured light?”

8. Beautiful objects are the next general source of the pleasures of the imagination: the works of nature in particular. So persons in all ages have been delighted

“With sylvan scenes, and hill and dale,
And liquid lapse of murmuring streams.”

Others are pleased with adding art to nature; as in gardens, with their various ornaments: others with mere works of art; as buildings, and representations of nature, whether in statues or painting. Many likewise find pleasure in beautiful apparel, or furniture of various kinds. But novelty must be added to beauty, as well as grandeur, or it soon palls upon the sense.

9. Are we to refer to the head of beauty, the pleasure which many take in a favourite animal? Suppose a sparrow, a parrot, a cat, a lap-dog? Sometimes it may be owing to this. At other times, none but the person pleased can find any beauty at all in the favourite. Nay, perchance it is, in the eyes of all other persons, superlatively ugly. In this case, the pleasure seems to arise from mere whim or caprice; that is, madness.

10. Must we not refer to the head of novelty, chiefly, the pleasure found in most diversions and amusements; which were we to repeat them daily but a few months would be utterly flat and insipid? To the same head we may refer the pleasure that is taken in collecting curiosities; whether they are natural or artificial, whether old or new. This sweetens the labour of the virtuoso, and makes all his labour light.

11. But it is not chiefly to novelty that we are to impute the pleasure we receive from music. Certainly this has an intrinsic beauty, as well as frequently an intrinsic grandeur. This is a beauty and grandeur of a peculiar kind, not easy to be expressed; nearly related to the sublime and the beautiful in poetry, which give an exquisite pleasure. And yet it may be allowed, that novelty heightens the pleasure which arises from any of these sources.

12. From the study of languages, from criticism, and from history, we receive a pleasure of a mixed nature.

in all these, there is always something new ; frequently, something beautiful or sublime. And history not only gratifies the imagination in all these respects, but likewise pleases us by touching our passions ; our love, desire, joy, pity. The last of these gives us a strong pleasure, though strangely mixed with a kind of pain. So that one need not wonder at the exclamation of a fine poet,—

“What is all mirth but turbulence unholy,
When to the charms compared of heavenly melancholy?”

13. The love of novelty is immeasurably gratified by experimental philosophy ; and, indeed, by every branch of natural philosophy ; which opens an immense field for still new discoveries. But is there not likewise a pleasure therein, as well as in mathematical and metaphysical studies, which does not result from the imagination, but from the exercise of the understanding ? unless we will say that the newness of the discoveries which we make by mathematical or metaphysical researches is one reason, at least, if not the chief, of the pleasure we receive therefrom.

14. I dwell the longer on these things, because so very few see them in the true point of view. The generality of men, and more particularly men of sense and learning, are so far from suspecting that there is, or can be, the least harm in them, that they seriously believe it is matter of great praise to *give ourselves wholly to them*. Who of them, for instance, would not admire and commend the indefatigable industry of that great philosopher who says, “I have now been eight-and-thirty years at my parish of Upminster ; and I have made it clear, that there are no less than three-and-fifty species of butterflies therein ; but if God should spare my life a few years longer, I do not doubt but I should demonstrate there are five-and-fifty !” I allow that most of these studies have their use, and that it is possible to *use* without *abusing* them. But if we seek our happiness in any of these things, then it commences an *idol*. And the enjoyment of it, however it may be admired and applauded by the world, is condemned

by God as neither better nor worse than damnable idolatry.

15. The third kind of love of the world, the apostle speaks of under that uncommon expression, *ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου*. This is rendered by our translators, *the pride of life*. It is usually supposed to mean the pomp and splendour of those that are in high life. But has it not a more extensive sense? Does it not rather mean, the seeking happiness in the praise of men, which, above all things, engenders pride? When this is pursued in a more pompous way by kings or illustrious men, we call it "thirst for glory;" when it is sought in a lower way by ordinary men, it is styled, "taking care of our reputation." In plain terms, it is seeking the honour that cometh of men, instead of that which cometh of God only.

16. But what creates a difficulty here, is this: we are required, not only to "give no offence to any one," and to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," but to "please all men for their good to edification." But how difficult is it to do this, with a single eye to God! We ought to do all that in us lies, to prevent the "good that is in us from being evil spoken of." Yea, we ought to value a clear reputation, if it be given us, only less than a good conscience. But yet, if we seek our happiness therein, we are liable to perish in our idolatry.

17. To which of the preceding heads is the *love of money* to be referred? Perhaps sometimes to one, and sometimes to another; as it is a means of procuring gratifications, either for "the desire of the flesh," for "the desire of the eyes," or "for the pride of life." In any of these cases, money is only pursued in order to a further end. But it is sometimes pursued for its own sake, without any further view. One, who is properly a miser, loves and seeks money for its own sake. He looks no further, but places his happiness in the acquiring or the possessing of it. And this is a species of idolatry distinct from all the preceding; and indeed the lowest, basest idolatry of which the human soul is capable. To seek happiness either in gratifying this or any other

of the desires above mentioned is, effectually, to renounce the true God, and to set up an idol in his place. In a word, so many objects as there are in the world, wherein men seek happiness instead of seeking it in God, so many *idols* they set up in their hearts, so many species of *idolatry* they practise.

18. I would take notice of only one more, which, though it in some measure falls in with several of the preceding, yet, in many respects, is distinct from them all: I mean the idolizing a human creature. Undoubtedly it is the will of God that we should all love one another. It is his will that we should love our relations and our Christian brethren with a peculiar love; and those in particular whom he has made particularly profitable to our souls. These we are commanded to "love fervently;" yet still "with a pure heart." But is not this "impossible with man?" to retain the strength and tenderness of affection, and yet, without any stain to the soul, with unspotted purity? I do not mean only unspotted by lust. I know this is possible. I know a person may have an unalterable affection for another without any desire of this kind. But is it without idolatry? Is it not loving the creature more than the Creator? Is it not putting a man or woman in the place of God? giving them your heart? Let this be carefully considered, even by those whom God has joined together; by husbands and wives, parents and children. It cannot be denied, that these ought to love one another tenderly; they are commanded so to do. But they are neither commanded nor permitted to love one another idolatrously. Yet how common is this! How frequently is a husband, a wife, a child, put in the place of God! How many that are accounted good Christians, fix their affections on each other, so as to leave no place for God! They seek their happiness in the creature, not in the Creator. One may truly say to the other,

"I view thee, lord and end of my desires."

That is, "I desire nothing more but thee! Thou art the thing that I long for! All my desire is unto thee, and

unto the remembrance of thy name." Now, if this is not flat idolatry, I cannot tell what is.

II. Having largely considered what those idols are of which the apostle speaks, I come now to inquire (which may be done more briefly) how we may keep ourselves from them.

1. In order to do this, I would advise you, first, be deeply convinced that none of them bring happiness; that no thing, no person under the sun, no, nor the amassment of all together, can give any solid, satisfactory happiness to any child of man. The world itself, the giddy, thoughtless world, acknowledge this unawares, while they allow, nay, vehemently maintain, "No man upon earth is contented." The very same observation was made near two thousand years ago:—

Nemo quam sibi sortem
Seu ratio dederit, seu fors objecerit, illa
Contentus vivat.

"Let fortune or let choice the station give
To man, yet none on earth contented live."

And if no man upon earth is contented, it is certain no man is happy. For, whatever station we are in, discontent is incompatible with happiness.

2. Indeed, not only the giddy, but the thinking part of the world allow that no man is contented; the melancholy proofs of which we see on every side, in high and low, rich and poor. And, generally, the more understanding they have, the more discontented they are. For,

"They know with more distinction to complain,
And have superior sense in feeling pain."

It is true every one has (to use the cant term of the day, and an excellent one it is) *his hobby-horse*; something that pleases the great boy for a few hours or days, and wherein he *hopes* to be happy. But though

"Hope blooms eternal in the human breast,
Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest."

Still he is walking in a vain shadow, which will soon vanish away! So that universal experience both our

own, and that of all our friends and acquaintance, clearly proves, that as God made our hearts for himself, so they cannot rest till they rest in him; that till we acquaint ourselves with him, we cannot be at peace. As "a scorner" of the wisdom of God "seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not;" so a scorner of happiness in God seeketh happiness, but findeth none.

3. When you are thoroughly convinced of this, I advise you, secondly, stand and consider what you are about. Will you be a fool and a madman all your days? Is it not high time to come to your senses? At length awake out of sleep, and shake yourself from the dust! Break loose from this miserable idolatry, and "choose the better part!" Steadily resolve to seek happiness where it may be found; where it cannot be sought in vain. Resolve to seek it in the true God, the fountain of all blessedness; and cut off all delay! Straightway put in execution what you have resolved! Seeing "all things are ready," "acquaint thyself now with him and be at peace."

4. But do not either resolve or attempt to execute your resolution, trusting in your own strength. If you do, you will be utterly foiled. You are not able to contend with the evil world, much less with your own evil heart; and least of all, with the powers of darkness. Cry, therefore, to the Strong for strength. Under a deep sense of your own weakness and helplessness, trust thou in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength. I advise you to cry to him for repentance in particular; not only for a full consciousness of your own impotence, but for a piercing sense of the exceeding guilt, baseness, and madness of the idolatry that has long swallowed you up. Cry for a thorough knowledge of yourself; of all your sinfulness and guiltiness. Pray that you may be fully discovered to yourself; that you may know yourself as also you are known. When once you are possessed of this genuine conviction, all your idols will lose their charms. And you will wonder, how you could so long lean upon those broken reeds which had so often sunk under you.

5. What should you ask for next?

“ ‘Jesus, now I have lost my all,
Let me upon thy bosom fall!’

Now let me see thee in thy vesture dipped in blood !

‘ Now stand in all thy wounds confest,
And wrap me in thy crimson vest !’

Hast thou not said, ‘If thou canst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?’ Lord, I *would* believe ! Help thou mine unbelief. And help me *now* ! Help me now to enter into the rest that remaineth for the people of God ; for those who give thee their heart, their whole heart ; who receive thee as their God, and their All. Oh, thou that art fairer than the children of men, full of grace are thy lips ! Speak that I may see thee ! And as the shadows flee before the sun, so let all my idols vanish at thy presence !”

6. From the moment that you begin to experience this, fight the good fight of faith ; take the kingdom of heaven by violence ! Take it as it were by storm ! Deny yourself every pleasure that you are not divinely conscious brings you nearer to God. Take up your cross daily : regard no pain, if it lies in your way to him. If you are called thereto, scruple not to pluck out the right eye, and to cast it from you. Nothing is impossible to him that believeth : you can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth you. Do valiantly ; and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free. Yea, go on in his name, and in the power of his might, till you “know all that love of God that passeth knowledge : and then you have only to wait till he shall call you into his everlasting kingdom !

SERMON LXXIX.

ON DISSIPATION.

"This I speak—that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction."—1 Cor. vii. 35.

1. ALMOST in every part of our nation, more especially in the large and populous towns, we hear a general complaint among sensible persons, of the still increasing *dissipation*. It is observed to diffuse itself more and more, in the court, the city, and the country. From the continual mention which is made of this, and the continual declamations against it, one would naturally imagine that a word so commonly used was perfectly understood. Yet it may be doubted whether it be or no. Nay, we may very safely affirm, that few of those who frequently use the term understand what it means. One reason of this is, that, although the thing has been long among us, especially since the time of King Charles the Second, (one of the most dissipated mortals that ever breathed,) yet the word is not of long standing. It was hardly heard of fifty years ago, and not much before the present reign. So lately has it been imported: and yet it is so in every one's mouth that it is already worn threadbare; being one of the cant words of the day.

2. Another reason why it is so little understood may be, that among the numberless writers that swarm about us, there is not one (at least whom I have seen) that has published so much as a sixpenny pamphlet concerning it. We have, indeed, one short essay upon the subject; but exceeding few have seen it, as it stands in the midst of a volume of essays, the author of which

is little known in the world. And even this is so far from going to the bottom of the subject, that it only slightly glances over it, and does not so much as give us one definition of dissipation (which I looked narrowly for) from the beginning to the end.

3. We are accustomed to speak of dissipation, as having respect chiefly, if not wholly, to the outward behaviour; to the manner of life. But it is within before it appears without: it is in the heart, before it is seen in the outward conversation. There must be a dissipated spirit before there is a dissipated manner of life. But what is dissipation of spirit? This is the first and the grand inquiry.

4. God created all things for himself; more especially all intelligent spirits. (And indeed it seems that intelligence, in some kind or degree, is inseparable from spiritual beings; that intelligence is as essential to spirits, as extension is to matter.) He made those more directly for himself, to know, love, and enjoy him. As the sun is the centre of the solar system, so (as far as we may compare material things with spiritual) we need not scruple to affirm that God is the centre of spirits. And as long as they are united to Him, created spirits are at rest: they are at rest so long, and no longer, as they "attend upon the Lord without distraction."

5. This expression of the apostle (not to encumber ourselves at present with the particular occasion of his speaking it) is exceeding peculiar: *Προς το ευπροσεδρον τῷ Κυρίῳ*. The word which we render *attend upon*, literally means, sitting in a good posture for hearing. And therein St. Paul undoubtedly alluded to Mary sitting at the Master's feet. (Luke x. 39.) Meantime, Martha was *cumbered* with much serving; was *distracted*, *dissipated*; *περιεσπαστο*. It is the very expression, from whence St. Paul takes the word which we render *without distraction*.

6. And even as much serving dissipated the thoughts of Martha, and distracted her from attending to her

Lord's words, so a thousand things which daily occur are apt to dissipate our thoughts, and distract us from attending to His voice who is continually speaking to our hearts: I mean, to all that listen to his voice. We are encompassed on all sides with persons and things that tend to draw us from our centre. Indeed, every creature, if we are not continually on our guard, will draw us from our Creator. The whole visible world, all we see, hear, or touch, all the objects either of our senses or understanding, have a tendency to dissipate our thoughts from the invisible world; and to distract our minds from attending to Him who is both the Author and End of our being.

7. This is the more easily done, because we are all by nature *αθεοι*, *atheists* in the world; and that in so high a degree, that it requires no less than almighty power to counteract that tendency to dissipation which is in every human spirit, and restore the capacity of attending to God, and fixing itself on him. For this cannot be done till we are new creatures; till we are created anew in Jesus Christ: till the same power which made the world make us "a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within us."

8. But who is he that is thus renewed? He that believeth in the name of the Son of God. He alone that believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ is thus "born of God." It is by this faith alone, that he is "created anew in," or through, "Christ Jesus;" that he is restored to the image of God wherein he was created, and again centred in God; or, as the apostle expresses it, "joined to the Lord in one Spirit." Yet even then the believer may find in himself the remains of that carnal mind, that natural tendency to rest in created good, to acquiesce in visible things, which, without continual care, will press down his soul, and draw him from his Creator. Herein the world, the men that know not God, will never fail to join; at some times with design, and at other times perhaps without design: for their very spirit is infectious, and insensibly changes

ours into its own likeness. And we may be well assured, the prince of this world, the devil, will assist them with all his might. He will labour with all his strength, and, what is far more dangerous, with all his subtlety, if by any means he may draw us away from our simplicity towards Christ; from our simple adherence to him: from our union with him, through whom we are also united in one spirit to the Father.

9. But nothing is more certain than this,—that though he may tempt the strongest believer to give up his simplicity toward Christ, and scatter his thoughts and desires among worldly objects; yet he cannot force even the weakest: for the grace of God is still sufficient for him. The same grace which at first united him to God is able to continue that happy union, in spite of all the rage, and all the strength, and all the subtlety of the enemy. God has never left himself without witness that he has power to deliver them that trust in him, as out of every temptation that can assault them, so out of this in particular. He has still a little flock who do, in fact, “attend upon him without distraction;” who, cleaving to him with full purpose, are not dissipated from him, no, not for a moment; but “rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks.”

10. But so far as any one yields to this temptation, so far he is *dissipated*. The original word properly signifies to *disperse* or *scatter*. So the sun dissipates, that is, scatters, the clouds; the wind dissipates, or scatters, the dust; and, by an easy metaphor, our thoughts are said to be dissipated, when they are irregularly scattered up and down. In like manner, our desires are dissipated, when they are unbinged from God, their proper centre, and scattered to and fro among the poor, perishing, unsatisfying things of the world. And, indeed, it may be said of every man that is a stranger to the grace of God, that all his passions are dissipated,—

"Scatter'd o'er all the earth abroad,
Immeasurably far from God."

11. Distraction, in St. Paul's sense, is nearly allied to, or rather the same with, dissipation : consequently, to attend upon the Lord without distraction is the same as to attend upon the Lord without dissipation. But whenever the mind is unbinged from God, it is so far dissipated or distracted. Dissipation then, in general, may be defined, "the uncentring the soul from God." And whatever uncentres the mind from God does properly dissipate us.

12. Hence we may easily learn what is the proper, direct meaning of that common expression,—*a dissipated man*. He is a man that is separated from God ; that is disunited from his centre ; whether this be occasioned by hurry of business, by seeking honour or preferment, or by fondness for diversions, for silly pleasures, so called, or for any trifle under the sun. The vulgar, it is true, commonly confine this character to those who are violently attached to women, gaming, drinking ; to dancing, balls, races, or the poor childish diversion of "running foxes and hares out of breath." But it equally belongs to the serious fool who forgets God by a close attention to any worldly employment, suppose it were of the most elegant or of the most important kind. A man may be as much dissipated from God by the study of the mathematics or astronomy, as by fondness for cards or hounds. Whoever is habitually inattentive to the presence and will of his Creator, he is a dissipated man.

13. Hence we may likewise learn that a dissipated life is not barely that of a powdered beau, of a *petit maitre*, a gamester, a woman-hunter, a play-house-hunter, a fox-hunter, or a shatter-brain of any kind ; but the life of an honourable statesman, a gentleman, or a merchant, that is "without God in the world." Agreeably to this, *a dissipated age* (such as is the present, perhaps beyond all that ever were, at least, that are recorded in history) is an age wherein God

is generally forgotten. And a *dissipated nation* (such as England is at present in a superlative degree) is a nation, a vast majority of which have not God "in all their thoughts."

14. A plain consequence of these observations is, (what some may esteem a paradox,) that *dissipation*, in the full, general meaning of the word, is the very same thing with *ungodliness*. The name is new; but the thing is, undoubtedly, almost as old as the creation. And this is, at present, the peculiar glory of England, wherein it is not equalled by any nation under heaven. We therefore speak an unquestionable truth when we say, there is not on the face of the earth another nation (at least, that we ever heard of) so perfectly *dissipated* and *ungodly*; not only so totally "without God in the world," but so openly setting him at defiance. There never was an age that we read of in history, since Julius Cæsar, since Noah, since Adam, wherein dissipation or ungodliness did so generally prevail, both among high and low, rich and poor. ✕

15. But still, blessed be God!—

"All are not lost; there be who faith
Prefer, and piety to God!"

There are some, I trust more than seven thousand, yea, or ten times that number, in England, who have not yet bowed either their knee or their heart to the God of this world; who, cleaving close to the God of heaven, are not borne away by the flood, by the general, the almost universal, torrent of dissipation or ungodliness. They are not of the mind of gentle Crispus,—

Qui nunquam direxit brachia contra
Torrentem,—

"who never attempted to swim against the stream."
They dare swim against the stream. Each of them can truly say,
1

Nec me, qui cætera, vincit
Impetus et rapido contrarius evehor orbi.*

If they cannot turn the tide back, they can at least bear an open testimony against it. They are therefore free from the blood of their ungodly countrymen : it must be upon their own head.

16. But by what means may we avoid the being carried away by the overflowing stream of dissipation? It is not difficult for those who believe the Scripture to give an answer to this question. Now, I really believe the Bible to be the word of God ; and on that supposition I answer, The radical cure of all dissipation is, the "faith that worketh by love." If, therefore, you would be free from this evil disease, first, "continue steadfast in the faith ; in that faith which brings "the Spirit of adoption, crying in your heart, Abba, Father ;" whereby you are enabled to testify, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God ; who loved me, and gave himself for me." By this faith you "see Him that is invisible, and set the Lord always before you." Next, "building yourselves up in your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto everlasting life." And as long as you walk by this rule, you will be superior to all dissipation.

17. How exactly does this agree (though there is a difference in the expression) with that observation of pious Kempis ! "Simplicity and purity are the two wings which lift the soul up to heaven. Simplicity is in the intention, purity in the affection." For what is this but (in the apostle's language) simple "faith working by love?" By that simplicity you always see God, and by purity you love him. What is it, but having (as one of the ancients speaks) "the loving eye of the soul

* The following is Addison's translation of this quotation from Ovid :—

"I steer against their motions ; nor am I
Borne back by all the current of the sky."—*Edm.*
9

fixed upon God?" And as long as your soul is in this posture, dissipation can have no place.

18. It is with great judgment, therefore, that great and good Bishop Taylor, in his "Rules of Holy Livign and Dying," (of whom Bishop Warburton, a person not very prone to commend, used to say, "I have no conception of a greater genius on earth than Dr. Jeremy Taylor,") premises to all his other rules those concerning purity of intention. And has he not the authority of our Lord himself so to do? who lays it down as an universal maxim, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Singly aim at God. In every step thou takest, eye Him alone. Pursue one thing: happiness in knowing, in loving, in serving God. Then shall thy soul be full of light: full of the light of the glory of God; of his glorious love, shining upon thee from the face of Jesus Christ.

19. Can any thing be a greater help to universal holiness, than the continually seeing the light of his glory? It is no wonder, then, that so many wise and good men have recommended, to all who desire to be truly religious, the exercise of the presence of God. But in doing this, some of those holy men seem to have fallen into one mistake: (particularly, an excellent writer of our own country, in his letters concerning "The Spirit of Prayer:") they put men, wholly unawakened, unconvinced of sin, upon this exercise, at their very entrance into religion; whereas this certainly should not be the first, but rather one of the last things. They should begin with repentance; the knowledge of themselves; of their sinfulness, guilt, and helplessness. They should be instructed next, to seek peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Then let them be taught to retain what they have received; to "walk in the light of his countenance;" yea to "walk in the light as he is in the light," without any darkness at all; till "the blood of Jcsus Christ cleanseth" them "from all sin."

20. It was from a full conviction of the absolute

necessity there is of a Christian's setting the Lord always before him, that a set of young gentlemen in Oxford, who, many years ago, used to spend most of their evenings together, in order to assist each other in working out their salvation, placed that question first in their scheme of daily self-examination: "Have I been *simple* and *recollected* in all I said or did?" Have I been *simple*?—that is, setting the Lord always before me, and doing every thing with a single view of pleasing him?—*Recollected*?—that is, quickly gathering in my scattered thoughts; recovering my simplicity, if I had been in anywise drawn from it by men, or devils, or my own evil heart? By this means they were preserved from dissipation, and were enabled, each of them, to say, "By the grace of God, *this one thing I do*: (at least, it is my constant aim :) I see God, I love God, I serve God, I glorify him with my body and with my spirit."

21. The same thing seems to be intended by two uncommon words which are frequently found in the writings of those pious men who are usually styled mystics. I mean, *introversion* and *extroversion*. "Examine yourselves," says St. Paul to the Corinthians, and in them to the Christians of all ages; "know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" that is, unbelievers, unable to bear the touchstone of God's word. Now, the attending to the voice of Christ within you is what they term *introversion*. The turning the eye of the mind from him to outward things they call *extroversion*. By this your thoughts wander from God and you are properly dissipated; whereas by *introversion* you may be always sensible of his loving presence; you continually hearken to whatever it pleases your Lord to say to your heart: and if you continually listen to his inward voice, you will be kept from all dissipation.

22. We may, lastly, learn hence, what judgment to form of what is frequently urged in favour of the English nation, and of the present age; namely, that, in other respects, England stands on a level with other nations, and the present age stands upon a level with any of the

preceeding : only it is allowed we are more *dissipated* than our neighbours ; and this age is more dissipated than the preceeding ages. Nay, if this is allowed, all is allowed. It is allowed that this nation is worse than any of the neighbouring nations ; and that this age is worse, essentially worse, than any of the preceeding ages. For as dissipation or ungodliness is the parent of all sin ; of all unrighteousness ; of unmercifulness ; injustice, fraud, perfidy ; of every possible evil temper, evil word, or evil action ; so it, in effect, comprises them all. Whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are of evil report, whatsoever things are unholy : if there be any vice ; all these are included in ungodliness, usually termed "dissipation." Let not, therefore, any lover of virtue and truth say one word in favour of this monster : let no lover of mankind once open his mouth to extenuate the guilt of it. Abhor it as you would abhor the devil, whose offspring and likeness it is ! Abhor it, as you would abhor the extinction of all virtue, and the universal prevalence of an earthly, sensual, devilish spirit ; and flee from it as you would flee (if you saw it open before you) from the lake of fire burning with brimstone !

SERMON LXXX.

ON FRIENDSHIP WITH THE WORLD.

"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore desireth to be a friend of the world is an enemy of God."—JAMES iv. 4.

1. THERE is a passage in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which has been often supposed to be of the same import with this: "Be not conformed to this world:" (xii. 2 :) but it has little or no relation to it; it speaks of quite another thing. Indeed, the supposed resemblance arises merely from the use of the word *world* in both places. This naturally leads us to think that St. Paul means by *conformity to the world*, the same which St. James means by *friendship with the world*; whereas they are entirely different things, as the words are quite different in the original; for St. Paul's word is *αἰών*, St. James's is *κόσμος*. However, the words of St. Paul contain an important direction to the children of God. As if he had said, "Be not conformed to either the wisdom, or the spirit, or the fashions of the age; of either the unconverted Jews, or the heathens, among whom ye live. You are called to show, by the whole tenor of your life and conversation, that you are 'renewed in the spirit of your mind, after the image of him that created you;' and that your rule is not the example or will of man, but 'the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.'"

2. But it is not strange, that St. James's caution against friendship with the world should be so little un-

derstood, even among Christians. For I have not been able to learn that any author, ancient or modern, has wrote upon the subject: no, not (so far as I have observed) for sixteen or seventeen hundred years. Even that excellent writer, Mr. Law, who has treated so well many other subjects, has not, in all his practical treatises, wrote one chapter upon it; no, nor said one word, that I remember, or given one caution, against it. I never heard one sermon preached upon it, either before the University or elsewhere. I never was in any company where the conversation turned explicitly upon it even for one hour.

3. Yet are there very few subjects of so deep importance; few that so nearly concern the very essence of religion, the life of God in the soul; the continuance and increase, or the decay, yea, extinction of it. From the want of instruction in this respect, the most melancholy consequences have followed. These indeed have not affected those who were still dead in trespasses and sins; but they have fallen heavy upon many of those who were truly alive to God. They have affected many of those called Methodists, in particular; perhaps more than any other people. For want of understanding this advice of the apostle, (I hope rather than from any contempt of it,) many among them are sick, spiritually sick, and many sleep, who were once thoroughly awakened. And it is well if they awake any more till their souls are required of them. It has appeared difficult to me to account for what I have frequently observed: many who were once greatly alive with God, whose conversation was in heaven, who had their affections on things above, not on things of the earth; though they walked in all the ordinances of God, though they still abounded in good works, and abstained from all known sin, yea, and from the appearance of evil; yet they gradually and insensibly decayed; (like Jonah's gourd, when the worm ate the root of it;) in so much that they are less alive to God now, than they were ten, twenty, or thirty years ago. But it is easily accounted for, if we observe that

as they increased in goods, they increased in *friendship with the world* : which, indeed, must always be the case, unless the mighty power of God interpose. But in the same proportion as they increased in this, the life of God in their souls decreased.

4. Is it strange that it should decrease, if those words are really found in the oracles of God : "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" What is the meaning of these words? Let us seriously consider. And may God open the eyes of our understanding; that in spite of all the mist wherewith the wisdom of the world would cover us, we may discern what is the good and acceptable will of God!

5. Let us, first, consider what it is which the apostle here means by *the world*. He does not here refer to this outward frame of things, termed in Scripture heaven and earth; but to the inhabitants of the earth, the children of men, or, at least, the greater part of them. But what part? This is fully determined both by our Lord himself, and by his beloved disciple. First, by our Lord himself. His words are, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And all these things will they do unto you, because they know not him that sent me." (John xv. 18, &c.) You see here "*the world*" is placed on one side, and *those who "are not of the world"* on the other. They whom God has "chosen out of the world," namely, by "sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," are set in direct opposition to those whom he hath not so chosen. Yet again: those "who know not him that sent me," saith our Lord, who know not God, they are "*the world*."

6. Equally express are the words of the beloved disciple: "Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you:

we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." (1 John iii. 13, 14.) As if he had said, "You must not expect any should love you, but those that have 'passed from death unto life.'" It follows, those that are not passed from death unto life, that are not alive to God, are "*the world*." The same we may learn from those words in the fifth chapter, verse 19, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." Here "*the world*" plainly means, those that are not of God, and who, consequently, "lie in the wicked one."

7. Those, on the contrary, *are of God*, who love God; or at least "fear him and keep his commandments." This is the lowest character of those that "are of God;" who are not properly sons, but servants; who depart from evil, and study to do good, and walk in all his ordinances, because they have the fear of God in their hearts, and a sincere desire to please him. Fix in your heart this plain meaning of the term "*the world*;" those who do not thus fear God. Let no man deceive you with vain words: it means neither more or less than this.

8. But, understanding the term in this sense, what kind of friendship may we have with the world? We may, we ought to love them as ourselves; (for they also are included in the word *neighbour*;) to bear them real good-will; to desire their happiness, as sincerely as we desire the happiness of our own souls: yea, we are in a sense to honour them, (seeing we are directed by the apostle to "honour all men,") as the creatures of God; nay, as immortal spirits, who are capable of knowing, of loving, and of enjoying him to all eternity. We are to honour them as redeemed by His blood who "tasted death for every man." We are to bear them tender compassion when we see them forsaking their own mercies, wandering from the path of life, and hastening to everlasting destruction. We are never willingly to grieve their spirits, or give them any pain; but on the contrary to give them all the pleasure we in-

nocently can; seeing we are to "please all men for their good." We are never to aggravate their faults; but willingly to allow all the good that is in them.

9. We may and ought to speak to them on all occasions in the most kind and obliging manner we can. We ought to speak no evil of them when they are absent, unless it be absolutely necessary; unless it be the only means we know of preventing their doing hurt: otherwise, we are to speak of them with all the respect we can, without transgressing the bounds of truth. We are to behave to them, when present, with all courtesy, showing them all the regard we can without countenancing them in sin. We ought to do them all the good that is in our power, all they are willing to receive from us; following herein the example of the universal Friend, our Father which is in heaven, who, till they will condescend to receive greater blessings, gives them such as they are willing to accept; "causing his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sending" his "rain on the just and on the unjust."

10. "But what kind of friendship is it which we may not have with the world? May we not converse with ungodly men at all? Ought we wholly to avoid their company?" By no means. The contrary of this have been allowed already. If we were not to converse with them at all, "we must needs go out of the world." Then we could not show them those offices of kindness which have been already mentioned. We may, doubtless, converse with them, first, on business; in the various purposes of this life, according to that station therein, wherein the providence of God has placed us: secondly, when courtesy requires it; only we must take great care not to carry it too far: thirdly, when we have a reasonable hope of doing them good. But here too we have an especial need of caution, and of much prayer; otherwise we may easily burn ourselves, in striving to pluck other brands out of the burning.

11. We may easily hurt our own souls, by sliding into a close attachment to any of them that know not

God. This is the *friendship* which is "enmity with God:" we cannot be too jealous over ourselves, lest we fall into this deadly snare; lest we contract, or ever we are aware, a love of *complacency* or *delight* in them. Then only do we tread upon sure ground, when we can say with the Psalmist, "All my delight is in the saints that are upon earth, and in such as excel in virtue." We should have no *needless conversation* with them. It is our duty and our wisdom to be no oftener and no longer with them than is strictly necessary. And during the whole time we have need to remember and follow the example of him that said, "I kept my mouth as it were with a bridle while the ungodly was in my sight." We should enter into no sort of connection with them, further than is absolutely necessary. When Jehoshaphat forgot this, and formed a connection with Ahab, what was the consequence? He first lost his substance: "The ships" they sent out "were broken at Ezion-geber." And when he was not content with this warning, as well as that of the prophet Micaiah, but would go up with him to Ramoth-Gilead, he was on the point of losing his life.

12. Above all, we should tremble at the very thought of entering into a marriage-covenant, the closest of all other, with any person who does not love, or at least fear God. This is the most horrid folly, the most deplorable madness, that a child of God could possibly plunge into; as it implies every sort of connection with the ungodly which a Christian is bound in conscience to avoid. No wonder, then, it is so flatly forbidden of God; that the prohibition is so absolute and peremptory: "Be not unequally yoked with an unbeliever." Nothing can be more express. Especially, if we understand by the word "unbeliever" one that is so far from being a believer in the gospel sense,—from being able to say, "The life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me,"—that he has not even the faith of a servant: he does not "fear God and work righteousness."

13. But for what reason is the friendship of the world so absolutely prohibited? Why are we so strictly required to abstain from it? For two general reasons: First, because it is a sin in itself; secondly, because it is attended with most dreadful consequences.

First. It is a sin in itself; and, indeed, a sin of no common dye. According to the oracles of God, friendship with the world is no less than spiritual adultery. All who are guilty of it are addressed by the Holy Ghost in those terms, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses." It is plainly violating of our marriage-contract with God; by loving the creature more than the Creator; in flat contradiction to that kind command, "My son, give me thine heart."

14. It is a sin of the most heinous nature, as not only implying ignorance of God, and forgetfulness of him, or inattention to him, but positive "enmity against God." It is openly, palpably such. "Know ye not," says the apostle, can ye possibly be ignorant of this, so plain, so undeniable a truth, "that the friendship of the world is enmity against God?" Nay, and how terrible is the inference which he draws from hence! "Therefore, whosoever will be a friend of the world,"—(the words, properly rendered, are, *Whosoever desireth to be a friend of the world*,) of the men who know not God, whether he attain it or not,—*is*,—"is," *ipso facto*, constituted "an enemy of God." This very desire, whether successful or not, gives him a right to that appellation.

15. And as it is a sin, a very heinous sin, in itself, so it is attended with the most dreadful consequences. It frequently entangles men again in the commission of those sins from which "they were clean escaped." It generally makes them "partakers of other men's sins," even those which they do not commit themselves. It gradually abates their abhorrence and dread of sin in general, and thereby prepares them for falling an easy prey to any strong temptation. It lays them open to all those sins of omission whereof their worldly acquaintance are guilty. It insensibly lessens their exactness in pri-

vate prayer, in family duty, in fasting, in attending public service, and partaking of the Lord's supper. The indifference of those that are near them, with respect to all these, will gradually influence them: even if they say not one word (which is hardly to be supposed) to recommend their own practice, yet their example speaks, and is many times of more force than any other language. By this example, they are unavoidably betrayed, and almost continually, into unprofitable, yea, and into uncharitable conversation; till they no longer "set a watch before their mouth, and keep the door of their lips;" till they can join in backbiting, talebearing, and evil-speaking, without any check of conscience; having so frequently grieved the Holy Spirit of God, that he no longer reproves them for it: insomuch that their discourse is not now, as formerly, "seasoned with salt, and meet to minister grace to the hearers."

16. But these are not all the deadly consequences that result from familiar intercourse with unholy men. It not only hinders them from ordering their conversation aright, but directly tends to corrupt the heart. It tends to create or increase in us all that pride and self-sufficiency, all that fretfulness of resentment, yea, every irregular passion and wrong disposition, which are indulged by their companions. It gently leads them into habitual self-indulgence, and unwillingness to deny themselves; into unreadiness to bear or take up any cross; into a softness and delicacy; into evil shame, and the fear of man, that brings numberless snares. It draws them back into the love of the world; into foolish and hurtful desires; into the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, till they are swallowed up in them. So that, in the end, the last state of these men is far worse than the first.

17. If the children of God will connect themselves with the men of the world, though the latter should not endeavour to make them like themselves, (which is a supposition by no means to be made,) yea, though they should neither design nor desire it; yet they will

actually do it, whether they design it, and whether they endeavour it, or no. I know not how to account for it, but it is a real fact, that their very spirit is infectious. While you are near them, you are apt to catch their spirit, whether they will or no. Many physicians have observed, that not only the plague, and putrid or malignant fevers, but almost every disease men are liable to, are more or less infectious. And undoubtedly so are all spiritual diseases, only with great variety. The infection is not so swiftly communicated by some as it is by others. In either case, the person already diseased does not desire or design to infect another. The man who has the plague does not desire or intend to communicate his distemper to you. But you are not therefore safe: so keep at a distance, or you will surely be infected. Does not experience show that the case is the same with the diseases of the mind? Suppose the proud, the vain, the passionate, the wanton, do not desire or design to infect *you* with their own distempers; yet it is best to keep at a distance from them. You are not safe if you come too near them. You will perceive (it is well if it be not too late) that their very breath is infectious. It has been lately discovered that there is an atmosphere surrounding every human body, which naturally affects every one that comes within the limits of it. Is there not something analogous to this, with regard to a human spirit? If you continue long within their atmosphere, so to speak, you can hardly escape the being infected. The contagion spreads from soul to soul, as well as from body to body, even though the persons diseased do not intend or desire it. But can this reasonably be supposed? Is it not a notorious truth, that men of the world (exceeding few excepted) eagerly desire to make their companions like themselves? yea, and use every means, with their utmost skill and industry, to accomplish their desire. Therefore, fly for your life! Do not play with the fire, but escape before the flames kindle upon you.

18. But how many are the pleas for friendship with the world ! And how strong are the temptations to it ! Such of these as are the most dangerous, and, at the same time, most common, we will consider.

To begin with one that is the most dangerous of all others, and, at the same time, by no means uncommon. "I grant," says one, "the person I am about to marry is not a religious person. She does not make any pretensions to it. She has little thought about it. But she is a beautiful creature. She is extremely agreeable, and, I think, will make me a lovely companion."

This is a snare indeed ! perhaps one of the greatest that human nature is liable to. This is such a temptation as no power of man is able to overcome. Nothing less than the mighty power of God can make a way for you to escape from it. And this can work a complete deliverance : his grace is sufficient for you. But not unless you are a worker together with him : not unless you deny yourself, and take up your cross. And what you do, you must do at once ! Nothing can be done by degrees. Whatever you do in this important case, must be done at one stroke. If it be done at all, you must at once cut off the right hand, and cast it from you ! Here is no time for conferring with flesh and blood. At once, conquer or perish !

19. Let us turn the tables. Suppose a woman that loves God is addressed by an agreeable man ; genteel, lively, entertaining ; suitable in all other respects, though not religious : what should she do in such a case ? What she *should* do, if she believes the Bible, is sufficiently clear. But what *can* she do ? Is not this

"A test for human frailty too severe ?"

Who is able to stand in such a trial ? Who can resist such a temptation ? None but one that holds fast the shield of faith, and earnestly cries to the Strong for strength. None but one that gives herself to watching and prayer, and continues therein with all perseverance. If she does this, she will be a happy witness, in the

midst of an unbelieving world, that as "all things are possible with God," so "all things are possible to her that believeth."

20. But either a man or a woman may ask, "What, if the person who seeks my acquaintance be a person of a strong natural understanding, cultivated by various learning? May not I gain much useful knowledge by a familiar intercourse with him? May I not learn many things from him, and much improve my own understanding?" Undoubtedly you may improve your own understanding, and you may gain much knowledge. But still, if he has not at least the fear of God, your loss will be far greater than your gain. For you can hardly avoid decreasing in holiness as much as you increase in knowledge. And if you lose one degree of inward or outward holiness, all the knowledge you gain will be no equivalent.

21. "But his fine and strong understanding, improved by education, is not his chief recommendation. He has more valuable qualifications than these: he is remarkably good-humoured; he is of a compassionate, humane spirit; and has much generosity in his temper." On these very accounts, if he does not fear God, he is infinitely more dangerous. If you converse intimately with a person of this character, you will surely drink into his spirit. It is hardly possible for you to avoid stopping just where he stops. I have found nothing so difficult in all my life as to converse with men of this kind (*good sort of men*, as they are commonly called) without being hurt by them. Oh, beware of them! Converse with them just as much as business requires, and no more: otherwise, (though you do not feel any present harm,) yet by slow and imperceptible degrees, they will attach you again to earthly things, and damp the life of God in your soul.

22. It may be, the persons who are desirous of your acquaintance, though they are not experienced in religion, yet understand it well, so that you frequently reap advantage from their conversation. If this be really the

case, (as I have known a few instances of the kind,) it seems you may converse with them; only very sparingly and very cautiously: otherwise you will lose more of your spiritual life than all the knowledge you gain is worth.

23. "But the persons in question are useful to me, in carrying on my temporal business. Nay, on many occasions, they are necessary to me; so that I could not well carry it on without them." Instances of this kind frequently occur. And this is doubtless a sufficient reason for having some intercourse, perhaps frequently, with men that do not fear God. But even this is by no means a reason for your contracting an intimate acquaintance with them. And you here need to take the utmost care, "lest even by that converse with them which is necessary, while your fortune in the world increases, the grace of God should decrease in your soul."

24. There may be one more plausible reason given for some intimacy with an unholy man. You may say, "I have been helpful to him. I have assisted him when he was in trouble; and he remembers it with gratitude. He esteems and loves *me*, though he does not love God. Ought I not then to love *him*? Ought I not to return love for love? Do not even heathens and publicans so?" I answer, You should certainly return love for love; but it does not follow that you should have any intimacy with him. That would be at the peril of your soul. Let your love give itself vent in constant and fervent prayer: wrestle with God for him. But let not your love for him carry you so far as to weaken, if not destroy, your own soul.

25. "But must I not be intimate with my relations; and that whether they fear God or not? Has not his providence recommended these to me?" Undoubtedly it has: but there are relations nearer or more distant. The nearest relations are husbands and wives. As these have taken each other for better or worse, they must make the best of each other; seeing, as God has joined them together, none can put them asunder; unless in

case of adultery, or when the life of one or the other is in imminent danger. Parents are almost as nearly connected with their children. You cannot part with them while they are young; it being your duty to "train them up," with all care, "in the way wherein they should go." How frequently you should converse with them when they are grown up, is to be determined by Christian prudence. This also will determine how long it is expedient for children, if it be at their own choice, to remain with their parents. In general, if they do not fear God, you should leave them as soon as is convenient. But wherever you are, take care (if it be in your power) that they do not want the necessities or conveniences of life. As for all other relations, even brothers or sisters, if they are of the world, you are under no obligation to be intimate with them: you may be civil and friendly at a distance.

26. But allowing that "the friendship of the world is enmity against God," and, consequently, that it is the most excellent way, indeed the only way to heaven, to avoid all intimacy with worldly men; yet, who has resolution to walk therein? who even of those that love or fear God? for these only are concerned in the present question. A few I have known who, even in this respect, were lights in a benighted land; who did not and would not either contract or continue any acquaintance with persons of the most refined and improved understanding, and the most engaging tempers, merely because they were of the world, because they were not alive to God: yea, though they were capable of improving them in knowledge, or of assisting them in business: nay, though they admired and esteemed them for that very religion which they did not themselves experience; a case one would hardly think possible, but of which there are many instances at this day. Familiar intercourse even with these they steadily and resolutely refrain from, for conscience' sake.

27 Go thou and do likewise, whosoever thou art that art a child of God by faith! Whatever it cost, flee

spiritual adultery ! Have no friendship with the world. However tempted thereto by profit or pleasure, contract no intimacy with worldly-minded men. And if thou hast contracted any such already, break it off without delay. Yea, if thy ungodly friend be dear to thee as a right eye, or useful as a right hand, yet confer not with flesh and blood, but pluck out the right eye, cut off the right hand, and cast them from thee ! It is not an indifferent thing. Thy life is at stake ; eternal life or eternal death. And is it not better to go into life having one eye or one hand, than having both to be cast into hell-fire ? When thou knewest no better, the times of ignorance God winked at. But now thine eyes are opened, now the light is come, walk in the light ! Touch not pitch, lest thou be defiled. At all events, “keep thyself pure !”

28. But whatever others do, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, hear this, all ye that are called Methodists ! However importuned or tempted thereto, have no friendship with the world. Look round, and see the melancholy effects it has produced among your brethren ! How many of the mighty have fallen ! How many have fallen by this very thing ! They would take no warning : they *would* converse, and that intimately, with earthly-minded men, till they “measured back their steps to earth again !” Oh, “come out from among them !” from all unholy men, however harmless they may appear ; “and be ye separate :” at least, so far as to have no intimacy with them. As your “fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ ;” so let it be with those, and those only, who at least seek the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. So “shall ye be,” in a peculiar sense, “my sons and my daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

SERMON LXXXI.

IN WHAT SENSE WE ARE TO LEAVE THE WORLD.

“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And I will be to you a Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”—2 COR. vi. 17, 18.

1. How exceeding few in the religious world have duly considered these solemn words! We have read them over and over, but never laid them to heart, or observed that they contain as plain and express a command as any in the whole Bible. And it is to be feared, there are still fewer who understand the genuine meaning of this direction. Numberless persons in England have interpreted it as a command to come out of the established church. And in the same sense it has been understood by thousands in the neighbouring kingdoms. Abundance of sermons have been preached, and of books wrote, upon this supposition. And indeed many pious men have grounded their separation from the church chiefly on this text. “God himself,” say they, “commands us, ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate.’ And it is only upon this condition that he will receive us, and we shall be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.”

2. But this interpretation is totally foreign to the design of the apostle, who is not here speaking of this or that church, but on quite another subject. Neither did the apostle himself, or any of his brethren, draw any such inference from the words. Had they done so, it

would have been a flat contradiction both to the example and precept of their Master. For although the Jewish church was then full as *unclean*, as unholy, both inwardly and outwardly, as any Christian church now upon earth, yet our Lord constantly attended the service of it. And he directed his followers in this, as in every other respect, to tread in his steps. This is clearly implied in that remarkable passage: "The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses's seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not." (Matt. xxiii. 2, 3.) Even though they *themselves say, and do not*, though their lives contradict their doctrines; though they were ungodly men, yet our Lord here not only permits, but requires, his disciples to hear them. For he requires them to "observe and do what they say:" but this could not be, if they did not hear them. Accordingly, the apostles, as long as they were at Jerusalem, constantly attended the public service. Therefore it is certain these words have no reference to a separation from the established church.

3. Neither have they reference to the direction given by the apostle in his First Epistle to the Corinthians. The whole passage runs thus: "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat:" (v. 9-11.) This wholly relates to them that are members of the same Christian community. The apostle tells them expressly, he does not give this direction, not to company with such and such persons, with regard to the heathens, or to men in general; and adds this plain reason, "For then must ye needs go out of the world;" you could transact no business in it. "But if any man that is

called a brother,"—that is connected with you in the same religious society,—“be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” How important a caution is this! But how little is it observed, even by those that are, in other respects, conscientious Christians! Indeed, some parts of it are not easy to be observed, for a plain reason,—they are not easy to be understood. I mean, it is not easy to be understood to whom the characters belong. It is very difficult, for instance, to know, unless in some glaring cases, to whom the character of an *extortioner*, or of a *covetous* man, belongs. We can hardly know one or the other, without seeming at least to be “busy bodies in other men’s matters.” And yet the prohibition is as strong concerning converse with these, as with fornicators or adulterers. We can only act in the simplicity of our hearts, without setting up for infallible judges, (still willing to be better informed,) according to the best light we have.

4. But although this direction relates only to our Christian brethren; (such, at least, by outward profession;) that in the text is of a far wider extent: it unquestionably relates to all mankind. It clearly requires us to keep at a distance, as far as is practicable, from all ungodly men. Indeed, it seems, the word which we render *unclean thing*, τοῦ ἀκαθάρτου, might rather be rendered *unclean person*; probably alluding to the ceremonial law, which forbade *touching* one that was legally unclean. But even here, were we to understand the expression literally, were we to take the words in the strictest sense, the same absurdity would follow: we must needs, as the apostle speaks, “go out of the world;” we should not be able to abide in those callings which the providence of God has assigned us. Were we not to converse at all with men of those characters, it would be impossible to transact our temporal business. So that every conscientious Christian would have nothing to do but to flee into the desert.

It would not suffice to turn recluses, to shut ourselves up in monasteries or nunneries; for even then we must have some intercourse with ungodly men, in order to procure the necessaries of life.

5. The words, therefore, must necessarily be understood with considerable restriction. They do not prohibit our conversing with any man, good or bad, in the way of worldly business. A thousand occasions will occur whereon we must converse with them in order to transact those affairs which cannot be done without them. And some of these may require us to have frequent intercourse with drunkards, or fornicators: yea, sometimes it may be requisite for us to spend a considerable time in their company: otherwise we should not be able to fulfil the duties of our several callings. Such conversation therefore with men, holy or unholy, is no way contrary to the apostle's advice.

6. What is it, then, which the apostle forbids? First, the conversing with ungodly men when there is no necessity, no providential call, no business, that requires it; secondly, the conversing with them more frequently than business necessarily requires: thirdly, the spending more time in their company than is necessary to finish our business: above all, fourthly, the choosing ungodly persons, however ingenious or agreeable, to be our ordinary companions, or to be our familiar friends. If any instance of this kind will admit of less excuse than others, it is that which the apostle expressly forbids elsewhere; the being "unequally yoked with an unbeliever" in marriage; with any person that has not the love of God in their heart, or at least the fear of God before their eyes. I do not know any thing that can justify this; neither the sense, wit, or beauty of the person, nor temporal advantage, nor fear of want; no, nor even the command of a parent. For if any parent command what is contrary to the word of God, the child ought to obey God rather than man.

7 The ground of this prohibition is laid down at large in the preceding verses: "What fellowship hath right-

eousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever?" (Taking that word in the extensive sense, for him that hath neither the love nor fear of God.) "Ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them: and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." It follows, "Wherefore, come out from among them;" the unrighteous, the children of darkness, the sons of Belial, the unbelievers; "and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," or person, "and I will receive you."

8. Here is the ground of this prohibition to have any more intercourse with unholy men than is absolutely necessary. There can be no profitable *fellowship* between the righteous and the unrighteous; as there can be *no communion* between light and darkness,—whether you understand this of natural or spiritual darkness. As Christ can have *no concord* with *Belial*; so a believer in him can have no concord with an unbeliever. It is absurd to imagine that any true union or concord should be between two persons, while one of them remains in darkness, and the other walks in the light. They are subjects, not only of two separate, but of two opposite kingdoms. They act upon quite different principles; they aim at quite different ends. It will necessarily follow, that frequently, if not always, they will walk in different paths. How can they walk together, till they are agreed?—until they both serve either Christ or Belial?

9. And what are the consequences of our not obeying this direction? of our not coming out from among unholy men? of not being separate from them, but contracting or continuing a familiar intercourse with them? It is probable, it will not immediately have any apparent, visible ill consequences. It is hardly to be expected, that it will immediately lead us into any outward sin. Perhaps it may not presently occasion our

neglect of any outward duty. It will first sap the foundations of our religion : it will, by little and little, damp our zeal for God ; it will gently cool that fervency of spirit which attended our first love. If they do not openly oppose any thing we say or do, yet their very spirit will, by insensible degrees, affect our spirit, and transfuse into it the same lukewarmness and indifference toward God and the things of God. It will weaken all the springs of our soul, destroy the vigour of our spirit, and cause us more and more to slacken our pace in running the race that is set before us.

10. By the same degrees all needless intercourse with unholy men will weaken our divine evidence and conviction of things unseen : it will dim the eyes of the soul whereby we see Him that is invisible, and weaken our confidence in him. It will gradually abate our “taste of the powers of the world to come ;” and deaden that hope which before made us “sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.” It will imperceptibly cool that flame of love which before enabled us to say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee!” Thus it strikes at the root of all vital religion ; of our fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

11. By the same degrees, and in the same secret and unobserved manner, it will prepare us to “measure back our steps to earth again.” It will lead us softly to relapse into the love of the world from which we were clean escaped : to fall gently into *the desire of the flesh* ; the seeking happiness in the pleasures of sense ;—*the desire of the eye* ; the seeking happiness in the pleasures of imagination ;—*and the pride of life* ; the seeking it in pomp, in riches, or in the praise of man. And all this may be done by the assistance of the spirit who “beguiled Eve through his subtlety,” before we are sensible of his attack, or are conscious of any loss.

12. And it is not only the love of the world in all its branches which necessarily steals upon us, while we

converse with men of a worldly spirit further than duty requires, but every other evil passion and temper of which the human soul is capable; in particular, pride, vanity, censoriousness, evil surmising, proneness to revenge: while, on the other hand, levity, gayety, and dissipation steal upon us and increase continually. We know how all these abound in the men that know God. And it cannot be but they will insinuate themselves into all who frequently and freely converse with them: they insinuate most deeply into those who are not apprehensive of any danger; and most of all, if they have any particular affection, if they have more love than duty requires, for those who do not love God, with whom they familiarly converse.

13. Hitherto I have supposed that the persons with whom you converse are such as we use to call *good sort of people*; such as are styled, in the cant term of the day, men of *worthy* characters;—one of the most silly, insignificant words, that ever came into fashion. I have supposed them to be free from cursing, swearing, profaneness; from Sabbath-breaking and drunkenness; from lewdness, either in word or action; from dishonesty, lying, and slandering: in a word, to be entirely clear from open vice of every kind. Otherwise, whoever has even the fear of God must in anywise keep at a distance from them. But I am afraid that I have made a supposition which hardly can be admitted. I am afraid, some of the persons with whom you converse more than business necessarily requires, do not deserve even the character of *good sort of men*,—are not *worthy* of any thing but shame and contempt. Do not some of them live in open sin?—in cursing and swearing, drunkenness, or uncleanness? You cannot long be ignorant of this; for they take little pains to hide it. Now, is it not certain, all vice is of an infectious nature? for who can touch pitch and not be defiled? From these, therefore, you ought undoubtedly to flee as from the face of a serpent. Otherwise, how soon may “evil communications corrupt good manners!”

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14. I have supposed, likewise, that those unholy persons with whom you frequently converse have no desire to communicate their own spirit to *you*, or to induce *you* to follow their example. But this also is a supposition which can hardly be admitted. In many cases, their interest may be advanced by your being a partaker of their sins. But supposing interest to be out of the question, does not every man naturally desire, and more or less endeavour, to bring over his acquaintance to his own opinion or party? So that, as all good men desire and endeavour to make others good, like themselves, in like manner all bad men desire and endeavour to make their companions as bad as themselves.

15. But if they do not, if we allow this almost impossible supposition, that they do not desire or use any endeavours to bring you over to their own temper and practice, still it is dangerous to converse with them. I speak not only of openly vicious men, but of all that do not love God, or at least fear him, and sincerely "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Admit, such companions do not endeavour to make you like themselves; does this prove you are in no danger from them? See that poor wretch that is ill of the plague! He does not desire, he does not use the least endeavour, to communicate his distemper to you. Yet have a care! Touch him not! Nay, go not near him, or you know not how soon you may be in the same condition. To draw the parallel: Though we should suppose the man of the world does not desire, design, or endeavour to communicate his distemper to you, yet touch him not. Come not too near him; for it is not only his reasonings or persuasions that may infect your soul, but his very breath is infectious; particularly to those who are apprehensive of no danger.

16. If conversing freely with worldly-minded men has no other ill effect upon you, it will surely, by imperceptible degrees, make you less heavenly-minded. It will give a bias to your mind which will continually draw your soul to earth. It will incline you, without your

being conscious of it, instead of being wholly transformed in the renewing of your mind, to be again conformed to this world, in its spirit, in its maxims, and in its vain conversation. You will fall again into that levity and dissipation of spirit from which you had before clean escaped; into that superfluity of apparel, and into that foolish, frothy, unprofitable conversation which was an abomination to you when your soul was alive to God. And you will daily decline from that simplicity both of speech and behaviour whereby you once adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour

17. And if you go thus far in conformity to the world, it is hardly to be expected you will stop here. You will go further in a short time; having once lost your footing and begun to slide down, it is a thousand to one, you will not stop till you come to the bottom of the hill; till you fall yourself into some of those outward sins which your companions commit before your eyes, in your hearing. Hereby the dread and horror which struck you at first will gradually abate, till at length you are prevailed upon to follow their example. But suppose they do not lead you into outward sin, if they infect your spirit with pride, anger, or love of the world, it is enough: it is sufficient, without deep repentance, to drown your soul in everlasting perdition; seeing, (abstracted from all outward sin,) "to be carnally-minded is death."

18. But as dangerous as it is to converse familiarly with men that know not God, it is more dangerous still for men to converse with women of that character; as they are generally more insinuating than men, and have far greater power of persuasion; particularly if they are agreeable in their persons, or pleasing in their conversation. You must be more than man, if you can converse with such and not suffer any loss. If you do not feel any foolish or unholy desire; (and who can promise that you shall not?) yet it is scarce possible that you should not feel more or less of an improper softness, which will make you less willing and less able to persist in that habit of deuying yourself, and taking up your cross

daily, which constitute the character of a good soldier of Jesus Christ. And we know that not only fornicators, and adulterers, but even "the soft and effeminate," the delicate followers of a self-denying Master, "shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God." X

19. Such are the consequences which must surely, though perhaps slowly, follow the mixing of the children of God with the men of the world. And by this means, more than by any other, yea, than by all others put together, are the people called Methodists likely to lose their strength, and become like other men. It is indeed with a good design, and from a real desire of promoting the glory of God, that many of them admit of a familiar conversation with men that know not God. You have a hope of awakening them out of sleep, and persuading them to seek the things that make for their peace. But if, after a competent time of trial, you can make no impression upon them, it will be your wisdom to give them up to God; otherwise you are more likely to receive hurt from them, than to do them any good. For if you do not raise their hearts up to heaven, they will draw yours down to earth. Therefore, retreat in time, "and come out from among them, and be ye separate."

20. But how may this be done? What is the most easy and effectual method of separating ourselves from unholy men? Perhaps a few advices will make this plain to those that desire to know and do the will of God.

First: invite no unholy person to your house, unless on some very particular occasion. You may say, "But civility requires this; and, sure, religion is no enemy to civility. Nay, the apostle himself directs us to be *courteous*, as well as to be *pitiful*." I answer, you may be civil, sufficiently civil, and yet keep them at a proper distance. You may be courteous in a thousand instances, and yet stand aloof from them. And it was never the design of the apostle to recommend any such courtesy as must necessarily prove a snare to the soul.

21. Secondly: on no account accept any invitation from an unholy person. Never be prevailed upon to pay

a visit, unless you wish it to be repaid. It may be, a person desirous of your acquaintance will repeat the visit, twice or thrice. But if you steadily refrain from returning it, the visitant will soon be tired. It is not improbable, he will be disobliged; and perhaps he will show some marks of resentment. Lay your account with this, that when any thing of the kind occurs you may neither be surprised nor discouraged. It is better to please God and displease man, than to please man and displease God.

22. Thirdly: it is probable, you were acquainted with men of the world before you yourself knew God. What is the best to be done with regard to these? How may you most easily drop their acquaintance? First, allow a sufficient time to try whether you cannot by argument and persuasion, applied at the soft times of address, induce them to choose the better part. Spare no pains! Exert all your faith and love, and wrestle with God in their behalf. If, after all, you cannot perceive that any impression is made upon them, it is your duty gently to withdraw from them, that you be not entangled with them. This may be done in a short time, easily and quietly, by not returning their visits. But you must expect they will upbraid you with haughtiness and unkindness, if not to your face, yet behind your back. And this you can suffer for a good conscience. It is, properly, the reproach of Christ.

23. When it pleased God to give me a settled resolution to be not a *nominal*, but a *real* Christian, (being then about twenty-two years of age,) my acquaintance were as ignorant of God as myself. But there was this difference: I knew my own ignorance; they did not know theirs. I faintly endeavoured to help them, but in vain. Meantime I found, by sad experience, that even their *harmless* conversation, so called, damped all my good resolutions. But how to get rid of them was the question, which I resolved in my mind again and again. I saw no possible way, unless it should please God to remove me to another college. He did so, in a manner

utterly contrary to all human probability. I was elected fellow of a college where I knew not one person. I foresaw, abundance of people would come to see me, either out of friendship, civility, or curiosity; and that I should have offers of acquaintance new and old: but I had now fixed my plan. Entering now, as it were, into a new world, I resolved to have no acquaintance by chance, but by choice; and to choose such only as I had reason to believe would help me on my way to heaven. In consequence of this, I narrowly observed the temper and behaviour of all that visited me. I saw no reason to think that the greater part of these truly loved or feared God. Such acquaintance, therefore, I did not choose: I could not expect they would do me any good. Therefore, when any of these came to see me, I behaved as courteously as I could. But to the question, "When will you come to see me?" I returned no answer. When they had come a few times, and found I still declined returning the visit, I saw them no more. And I bless God, this has been my invariable rule for about threescore years. I knew many reflections would follow: but that did not move me; as I knew full well, it was my calling to go "through evil report and good report."

24. I earnestly advise all of you who resolve to be, not *almost*, but *altogether Christians*, to adopt the same plan, however contrary it may be to flesh and blood. Narrowly observe, which of those that fall in your way are like-minded with yourself: who among them have you reason to believe fear God and work righteousness. Set them down as worthy of your acquaintance: gladly and freely converse with them at all opportunities. As to all who do not answer that character, gently and quietly let them drop. However good-natured and sensible they may be, they will do you no real service. Nay, if they did not lead you into outward sin, yet they would be a continual clog to your soul, and would hinder your running with vigour and cheerfulness the race that is set before you. And if any of your friends that did

once run well "turn back from the holy commandment once delivered to them," first use every method that prudence can suggest, to bring them again into the good way. But if you cannot prevail, let them go, only still commending them unto God in prayer. Drop all familiar intercourse with them, and save your own soul.

25. I advise you, fourthly, walk circumspectly with regard to your relations. With your parents, whether religious or not, you must certainly converse, if they desire it; and with your brothers and sisters; more especially, if they want your service. I do not know that you are under any such obligation with respect to your more distant relations. Courtesy, indeed, and natural affection may require that you should visit them sometimes. But if they neither know nor seek God, it should certainly be as seldom as possible. And when you are with them, you should not stay a day longer than decency requires. Again: whichever of them you are with at any time, remember that solemn caution of the apostle, "Let no corrupt communication" (conversation) "come out of your mouth; but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." You have no authority to vary from this rule: otherwise, you "grieve the Holy Spirit of God." And if you keep closely to it, those who have no religion will soon dispense with your company.

26. Thus it is that those who fear or love God should "come out from among" all that do not fear him. Thus, in a plain scriptural sense, you should "be separate" from them; from all unnecessary intercourse with them. Yea, "touch not," saith the Lord, "the unclean thing," or person, any further than necessity requires; "and I will receive you" into the household of God. "And I will be unto you a Father;" will embrace you with paternal affection; "and ye shall be unto me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." The promise is express to all that renounce the company of ungodly men; provided their spirit and conversation are, in other respects, also suitable to their duty. God does here absolutely engage

to give them all the blessings he has prepared for his beloved children, both in time and eternity. Let all those, therefore, who have any regard for the favour and the blessing of God, first, beware how they contract any acquaintance, or form any connection, with ungodly men; any farther than necessary business, or some other providential call, requires : and, secondly, with all possible speed, all that the nature of the thing will admit, break off all such acquaintance already contracted, and all such connections already formed. Let no pleasure resulting from such acquaintance, no gain found or expected from such connections, be of any consideration, when laid in the balance against a clear, positive command of God. In such a case, "pluck out the right eye," tear away the most pleasing acquaintance,—“and cast it from thee :” give up all thought, all design of seeking it again “Cut off the right hand,”—absolutely renounce the most profitable connection,—“and cast it from thee.” “It is better for thee to enter into life with one eye,” or one hand, “than having two, to be cast into hell-fire.”

SERMON LXXXII.

ON TEMPTATION.

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."—
1 COR. x. 13.

1. IN the foregoing part of the chapter, the apostle has been reciting, on the one hand, the unparalleled mercies of God to the Israelites; and, on the other, the unparalleled ingratitude of that disobedient and gainsaying people. And all these things, as the apostle observes, "were written for our ensample;" that we might take warning from them, so as to avoid their grievous sins, and escape their terrible punishment. He then adds that solemn and important caution, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

2. But if we observe these words attentively, will there not appear a considerable difficulty in them? "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" If a man only *thinks he stands*, he is in no danger of falling. It is not possible that any one should fall, if he only *thinks he stands*. The same difficulty occurs, according to our translation, in those well-known words of our Lord, (the importance of which we may easily learn from their being repeated in the Gospel no less than eight times,) "To him that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even what he seemeth to have." "That which he *seemeth to have!*" Nay, if he only *seems to have it*, it is impossible it should be taken away. None can take away from another what he only *seems to have*. What a man only *seems to have*, he cannot possibly lose. This difficulty

may, at first, appear impossible to be surmounted. It is really so: it cannot be surmounted, if the common translation be allowed. But if we observe the proper meaning of the original word, the difficulty vanishes away. It may be allowed that the word *δοξει* does (sometimes at least, in some authors) mean no more than *to seem*. But I much doubt whether it ever bears that meaning in any part of the inspired writings. By a careful consideration of every text in the New Testament wherein this word occurs, I am fully convinced, that it nowhere lessens, but everywhere strengthens, the sense of the word to which it is annexed. Accordingly, *ο δοξει εχειν* does not mean, *what he seems to have*, but, on the contrary, *what he assuredly hath*. And so *ο δοξων εσταναι* does not mean, *he that seemeth to stand*, or he that *thinketh he standeth*, but *he that assuredly standeth*; he who standeth so fast, that he does not appear to be in any danger of falling; he that saith, like David, “I shall never be moved: thou, Lord, hast made my hill so strong.” Yet at that very time, thus saith the Lord, “Be not high-minded, but fear. Else shalt thou be cut off:” else shalt thou also be moved from thy steadfastness. The strength which thou assuredly hast shall be taken away. As firmly as thou didst really stand, thou wilt fall into sin, if not into hell.

3. But lest any should be discouraged by the consideration of those who once ran well, and were afterwards overcome by temptation; lest the fearful of heart should be utterly cast down, supposing it impossible for them to stand; the apostle subjoins to that serious exhortation, these comfortable words: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

I. 1. Let us begin with the observation which ushers in this comfortable promise: “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.” Our translators seem to have been sensible that this expression,

common to man, does by no means reach the force of the original word. Hence they substitute another in the margin, *moderate*. But this seems to be less significant than the other, and farther from the meaning of it. Indeed it is not easy to find any word in the English tongue, which answers the word *ανθρωπινος*. I believe the sense of it can only be expressed by some such circumlocution as this: "Such as is suited to the nature and circumstances of man; such as every man may reasonably expect, if he considers the nature of his body and his soul, and his situation in the present world." If we duly consider these, we shall not be surprised at any temptation that hath befallen us; seeing it is no other than such a creature, in such a situation, has all reason to expect.

2. Consider, first, the nature of that body with which your soul is connected. How many are the evils which it is every day, every hour, liable to! Weakness, sickness, and disorders of a thousand kinds are its natural attendants. Consider the inconceivably minute fibres, threads, abundantly finer than hair, (called from thence "capillary vessels,") whereof every part of it is composed; consider the innumerable multitude of equally fine pipes and strainers, all filled with circulating juice! And will not the breach of a few of these fibres, or the obstruction of a few of these tubes, particularly in the brain, or heart, or lungs, destroy our ease, health, strength, if not life itself? Now, if we observe that all pain implies temptation, how numberless must the temptations be which will beset every man, more or less, sooner or later, while he dwells in this corruptible body!

3. Consider, secondly, the present state of the soul, as long as it inhabits the house of clay. I do not mean in its unregenerate state; while it lies in darkness and the shadow of death; under the dominion of the prince of darkness, without hope, and without God in the world: no; look upon men who are raised above that deplorable state. See those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Yet still how weak is their under-

standing! How limited its extent! How confused, how inaccurate, are our apprehensions of even the things that are round about us! How liable are the wisest of men to mistake! to form false judgments!—to take falsehood for truth, and truth for falsehood; evil for good, and good for evil! What starts, what wanderings of imagination, are we continually subject to! And how many are the temptations which we have to expect even from these innocent infirmities?

4. Consider, thirdly, what is the present situation of even those that fear God. They dwell in the ruins of a disordered world, among men that know not God, that care not for him, and whose heart is fully set in them to do evil. How many are forced to cry out, “Wo is me, that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech; to have my habitations among the tents of Kedar!” among the enemies of God and man. How immensely outnumbered are those that would do well, by them that neither fear God nor regard man! And how striking is Cowley’s observation: “If a man that was armed cap-a-pie was closed in by a thousand naked Indians, their number would give them such advantage over him, that it would be scarce possible for him to escape. What hope, then, would there be for a naked, unarmed man to escape, who was surrounded by a thousand armed men?” Now, this is the case of every good man. He is not armed either with force or fraud, and is turned out, naked as he is, among thousands that are armed with the whole armour of Satan, and provided with all the weapons which the prince of this world can supply out of the armory of hell. If, then, he is not destroyed, yet how must a good man be tempted in the midst of this evil world!

5. But is it only from wicked men that temptations arise to them that fear God? It is very natural to imagine this; and almost every one thinks so. Hence, how many of us have said in our hearts, “Oh, if my lot were but cast among good men, among those that loved or even feared God, I should be free from all these tempta

tions!" Perhaps you would: probably you would not find the same sort of temptations which you have now to encounter. But you would surely meet with temptations of some other kind, which you would find equally hard to bear. For even good men, in general, though sin has not dominion over them, yet are not freed from the remains of it. They have still the remains of an evil heart, ever prone to "depart from the living God." They have the seeds of pride, of anger, of foolish desire; indeed, of every unholy temper. And any of these, if they do not continually watch and pray, may, and naturally will, spring up, and trouble, not themselves only, but all that are round about them. We must not, therefore, depend upon finding no temptation from those that fear, yea, in a measure love, God. Much less must we be surprised, if some of those who once loved God in sincerity, should lay greater temptations in our way than many of those that never knew him.

6. "But can we expect to find any temptation from those that are *perfected in love*?" This is an important question, and deserves a particular consideration. I answer, first, you may find every kind of temptation from those who *suppose* they are perfected, when indeed they are not: and so you may, secondly, from those who once really were so, but are now moved from their steadfastness. And if you are not aware of this, if you think they are still what they were once, the temptation will be harder to bear. Nay, thirdly, even those who "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free," who are now really perfect in love, may still be an occasion of temptation to *you*; for they are still encompassed with infirmities. They may be dull of apprehension; they may have a natural heedlessness, or a treacherous memory; they may have too lively an imagination: and any of these may cause little improprieties, either in speech or behaviour, which, though not sinful in themselves, may try all the grace you have: especially if you impute to perverseness of will (as it is very natural to do) what is really owing to defect

of memory, or weakness of understanding;—if these appear to you to be voluntary mistakes, which are really involuntary. So proper was the answer which a saint of God (now in Abraham's bosom) gave me, some years ago, when I said, "Jenny, surely now your mistress and you can neither of you be a trial to the other, as God has saved you both from sin!" "Oh, sir," said she, "if we are saved from sin, we still have infirmities enough to try all the grace that God has given us!"

7 But besides evil men, do not evil spirits also continually surround us on every side? Do not Satan and his angels continually go about seeking whom they may devour? Who is out of the reach of their malice and subtlety? Not the wisest or the best of the children of men. "The servant is not above his Master." If, then, they tempted him, will they not tempt us also? Yea, it may be, should God see good to permit, more or less, to the end of our lives. "No temptation," therefore, "hath taken us," which we had not reason to expect, either from our body or soul; either from evil spirits or evil men; yea, or even from good men, till our spirits return to God that gave them.

II. 1. Meantime, what a comfort it is to know, with the utmost certainty, that "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able." He knoweth what our ability is, and cannot be mistaken. "He knoweth" precisely "whereof we are made: he remembereth that we are but dust." And he will suffer no temptation to befall us but such as is proportioned to our strength. Not only his justice requires this, which could not punish us for not resisting any temptation if it were so disproportioned to our strength that it was impossible for us to resist it; not only his mercy,—that tender mercy which is over us, as well as over all his works; but above all, his faithfulness: seeing all his words are faithful and true; and the whole tenor of his promises altogether agrees with that declaration, "As thy days, so thy strength shall be."

2. In that execrable slaughter-house, the Romish

Inquisition, (most unfortunately called, "the house of mercy!") it is the custom of those holy butchers, while they are tearing a man's sinews upon the rack, to have the physician of the house standing by. His business is, from time to time, to observe the eyes, the pulse, and other circumstances of the sufferer, and to give notice when the torture has continued so long as it can without putting an end to his life; that it may be preserved long enough for him to undergo the residue of their tortures. But, notwithstanding all the physician's care, he is sometimes mistaken: and death puts a period to the sufferings of the patient before his tormentors are aware. We may observe something like this in our own case. In whatever sufferings or temptations we are, our Great Physician never departs from us. He is about our bed, and about our path. He observes every symptom of our distress, that it may not rise above our strength. And he cannot be mistaken concerning us. He knows the souls and bodies which he has given us. He sees exactly how much we can endure with our present degree of strength. And if this is not sufficient, he can increase it to whatever degree it pleases him. Nothing, therefore, is more certain, than that, in consequence of his wisdom, as well as his justice, mercy, and faithfulness, he never will, he never can, suffer us to be tempted above that we are able; above the strength which he either hath given already, or will give as soon as we need it.

III. 1. "He will with the temptation also" (this is the third point we are to consider) "make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."

The word *εξβασις*, which we render *a way to escape*, is extremely significant. The meaning of it is nearly expressed by the English word *out-let*; but more exact by the old word *out-gate*, still frequently used by the Scottish writers. It literally means *a way out*. And this God will either find or make; which He that hath all wisdom, as well as all power in heaven and earth, can never be at a loss how to do.

2. Either he *makes a way to escape* out of the temptation, by removing the occasion of it, or *in the temptation*; that is, the occasion remaining as it was, it is a temptation no longer. First, he makes a way to escape out of the temptation, by removing the occasion of it. The histories of mankind, of the church in particular, afford us numberless instances of this. And many have occurred in our own memory, and within the little circle of our acquaintance. One of many I think it worth while to relate, as a memorable instance of the faithfulness of God in making a way to escape out of temptation:—Elizabeth Chadsey, then living in London, (whose daughter is living at this day, and is no dishonour to her parent,) was advised to administer to her husband, who was supposed to leave much substance behind him. But when a full inquiry into his circumstances was made, it appeared that this supposition was utterly destitute of foundation; and that he not only left nothing at all behind him, but also was very considerably in debt. It was not long after his burial, that a person came to her house, and said, “Mrs. Chadsey, you are much indebted to your landlord, and he has sent me to demand the rent that is due to him.” She answered, “Sir, I have not so much money in the world: indeed I have none at all!” “But,” said he, “have you nothing that will fetch money?” She replied, “Sir, you see all that I have. I have nothing in the house but these six little children.” “Then,” said he, “I must execute my writ, and carry you to Newgate. But it is a hard case. I will leave you here till to-morrow, and will go and try if I cannot persuade your landlord to give you time.” He returned the next morning, and said, “I have done all I can, I have used all the arguments I could think of; but your landlord is not to be moved. He vows, if I do not carry you to prison without delay, I shall go thither myself.” She answered, “You have done *your* part. The will of the Lord be done!” He said, “I will venture to make one trial more, and will come again in the morning.” He came

in the morning, and said, "Mrs. Chadsey, God has undertaken your cause. None can give you any trouble now; for your landlord died last night. But he has left no will; and no one knows who is heir to the estate."

3. Thus God is able to deliver out of temptations, by removing the occasion of them. But are there not temptations, the occasions of which cannot be taken away? Is it not a striking instance of this kind, which we have in a late publication? "I was walking," says the writer of the letter, "over Dover cliffs, in a calm, pleasant evening, with a person whom I tenderly loved, and to whom I was to be married in a few days. While we were engaged in earnest conversation, her foot slipped, she fell down, and I saw her dashed in pieces on the beach. I lifted up my hands and cried out, 'This evil admits of no remedy. I must now go mourning all my days! My wound is incurable. It is impossible I should ever find such another woman! one so every way fitted for me.' I added, in an agony, 'This is such an affliction as even God himself cannot redress!' And just as I uttered the words, I awoke: for it was a dream!"—Just so can God remove any possible temptation; making it like a dream when one waketh!

4. Thus is God able to deliver out of temptation, by taking away the very ground of it. And he is equally able to deliver *in* the temptation; which, perhaps, is the greatest deliverance of all. I mean, suffering the occasion to remain as it was, he will take away the bitterness of it; so that it shall not be a temptation at all, but only an occasion of thanksgiving. How many proofs of this have the children of God, even in their daily experience! How frequently are they encompassed with trouble, or visited with pain or sickness! And when they ery unto the Lord, at some times he takes away the cup from them: he removes the trouble, or sickness, or pain; and it is as though it never had been: at other times, he does not make any outward change; outward trouble, or pain, or sickness continues; but the

consolations of the Holy One so increase as to overbalance them all; and they can boldly declare,

“Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
When thou, my God, art here.”

5. An eminent instance of this kind of deliverance is that which occurs in the Life of that excellent man, the Marquis de Renty. When he was in a violent fit of the rheumatism, a friend asked him, “Sir, are you in much pain?” He answered, “My pains are extreme: but through the mercy of God, I give myself up, not to them, but to him.” It was in the same spirit that my own father answered, though exhausted with a severe illness, (an ulcer in the bowels, which had given him little rest day or night, for upwards of seven months,) when I asked, “Sir, are you in pain now?” He answered, with a strong and loud voice, “God does indeed chasten me with pain; yea, all my bones with strong pain. But I thank him for all; I bless him for all; I love him for all.”

6. We may observe one more instance of a somewhat similar kind, in the Life of the Marquis de Renty. When his wife, whom he very tenderly loved, was exceeding ill, and supposed to be near death, a friend took the liberty to inquire how he felt himself on the occasion. He replied, “I cannot but say that this trial affects me in the most tender part. I am exquisitely sensible of my loss. I feel more than it is possible to express. And yet I am so satisfied that the will of God is done, and not the will of a vile sinner, that, were it not for fear of giving offence to others, I could dance and sing!” Thus the merciful, the just, the faithful God will, in one way or other, “in every temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.”

7. This whole passage is fruitful of instruction. Some of the lessons which we may learn from it are,

First. “Let him that most assuredly standeth take heed lest he fall” into *murmuring*; lest he say in his heart, “Surely no one’s case is like mine; no one was ever tried like *me*.” Yea, ten thousand. “There hath no

temptation taken you," but such as is "common to man;" such as you might reasonably expect, if you considered *what you are*; a sinner born to die; a sinful inhabitant of a mortal body, liable to numberless inward and outward sufferings;—and *where you are*; in a shattered, disordered world, surrounded by evil men, and evil spirits. Consider this, and you will not repine at the common lot, the general condition of humanity.

8. Secondly. "Let him that standeth take heed lest he fall;" lest he *tempt God*, by thinking or saying, "This is insupportable; this is too hard; I can never get through it; my burden is heavier than I can bear." Not so; unless something is too hard for God. He will not suffer you to be "tempted above that ye are able." He proportions the burden to your strength. If you want more strength, "ask, and it shall be given you."

9. Thirdly. "Let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall;" lest he tempt God by *unbelief*; by distrusting his faithfulness. Hath he said, "in every temptation he will make a way to escape?" And shall he not do it? Yea, verily;

"And far above thy thought
His counsel shall appear,
When fully he the work hath wrought
That caused thy needless fear."

10. Let us, then, receive every trial with calm resignation, and with humble confidence that He who hath all power, all wisdom, all mercy, and all faithfulness, will first support us in every temptation, and then deliver us out of all: so that in the end all things shall work together for good, and we shall happily experience, that all these things were for our profit, that we "might be partakers of his holiness."

SERMON LXXXIII.

ON PATIENCE.

“Let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”—JAMES i. 4.

1. “MY brethren,” says the apostle in the preceding verse, “count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” At first view, this may appear a strange direction ; seeing most temptations are, “for the present, not joyous, but grievous.” Nevertheless ye know by your own experience, that “the trial of your faith worketh patience:” and if “patience have its perfect work, ye shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

2. It is not to any particular person, or church, that the apostle gives this instruction ; but to all who are partakers of like precious faith, and are seeking after that common salvation. For as long as any of us are upon earth, we are in the region of temptation. He who came into the world to save his people from their sins, did not come to save them from temptation. He himself “knew no sin;” yet while he was in this vale of tears, “he suffered being tempted;” and herein also “left us an example, that we should tread in his steps.” We are liable to a thousand temptations, from the corruptible body variously affecting the soul. The soul itself, encompassed as it is with infirmities, exposes us to ten thousand more. And how many are the temptations which we meet with even from the good men (such, at least, they are in part, in their general character) with whom we are called to converse from day to day! Yet

what are these to the temptations we may expect to meet with from an evil world? seeing we all, in effect, “dwell with Mesech, and have our habitation in the tents of Kedar.” Add to this, that the most dangerous of our enemies are not those that assault us openly
No :

Angels our march oppose,
Who still in strength excel:
Our secret, sworn, eternal foes,
Countless, invisible !”

For is not our “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,” with all his infernal legions, still going “about seeking whom he may devour?” This is the case with all the children of men; yea, and with all the children of God, as long as they sojourn in this strange land. Therefore, if we do not wilfully and carelessly rush into them, yet we shall surely “fall into divers temptations;” temptations innumerable as the stars of heaven; and those varied and complicated a thousand ways. But, instead of counting this a loss, as unbelievers would do, “count it all joy; knowing that the trial of your faith,” even when it is “tried as by fire,” “worketh patience.” But “let patience have its perfect work, and ye shall be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”

3. But what is *patience*? We do not now speak of a heathen virtue; neither of a natural indolence; but of a gracious temper, wrought in the heart of a believer, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a disposition to suffer whatever pleases God, in the manner and for the time that pleases him. We thereby hold the middle way, neither *ολιγωροντες*, *despising* our sufferings, *making little* of them, passing over them lightly, as if they were owing to chance, or second causes; nor, on the other hand, *εκλυομενοι*, *affected too much, unnerved, dissolved, sinking under them*. We may observe, the proper object of patience is suffering, either in body or mind. Patience does not imply the not *feeling* this: it is not apathy or insensibility. It is at the utmost distance from stoical stupidity; yea, at an equal distance from fretfulness or

dejection. The patient believer is preserved from falling into either of these extremes, by considering,—Who is the Author of all his suffering: even God his Father;—What is the *motive* of his *giving us* to suffer? Not so properly his justice as his love;—and, What is the *end* of it? Our “profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness.”

4. Very nearly related to patience is *meekness*, if it be not rather a species of it. For may it not be defined, patience of injuries; particularly affronts, reproach, or unjust censure? This teaches, not to return evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing. Our blessed Lord himself seems to place a peculiar value upon this temper. This he peculiarly calls us to learn of him, if we would find rest for our souls.

5. But what may we understand by the *work of patience*? “Let patience have its perfect work.” It seems to mean, Let it have its full fruit or effect. And what is the fruit which the Spirit of God is accustomed to produce hereby, in the heart of a believer? One immediate fruit of patience is peace: a sweet tranquillity of mind; a serenity of spirit, which can never be found, unless where patience reigns. And this peace often rises into joy. Even in the midst of various temptations, those that are enabled “in patience to possess their souls” can witness, not only quietness of spirit, but triumph and exultation. This both

“Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opens in each breast a little heaven.”

6. How lively is the account which the apostle Peter gives, not only of the peace and joy, but of the hope and love, which God works in those patient sufferers “who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!” Indeed he appears herein to have an eye to this very passage of St. James: “Though ye are grieved for a season, with manifold temptations,” (the very word *ποικίλοις πειρασμοῖς*), “that the trial of your faith” (the same expression which was used by St

James) "may be found to praise, and honour, and glory, at the revelation of Jesus Christ; whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." See here the peace, the joy, and the love, which, through the mighty power of God, are the fruit or "work of patience!"

7 And as peace, hope, joy, and love are the fruits of patience, both springing from, and confirmed by it, so is also rational, genuine *courage*, which indeed cannot subsist without patience. The brutal courage, or rather fierceness, of a lion may probably spring from impatience; but true fortitude, the courage of a man, springs from just the contrary temper. Christian *zeal* is likewise confirmed and increased by patience, and so is *activity* in every good work; the same Spirit inciting us to be

"Patient in bearing ill, and doing well;"

making us equally willing to do and suffer the whole will of God.

8. But what is the *perfect work* of patience? Is it any thing less than the "perfect love of God," constraining us to love every soul of man, "even as Christ loved us?" Is it not the whole of religion, the whole "mind which was also in Christ Jesus?" Is it not "the renewal of our soul in the image of God, after the likeness of him that created us?" And is not the fruit of this, the constant resignation of ourselves, body and spirit, to God; entirely giving up all we are, all we have, and all we love, as a holy sacrifice, acceptable unto God, through the Son of his love? It seems this is "the perfect work of patience," consequent upon the trial of our faith.

9. But how does this work differ from that gracious work which is wrought in every believer, when he first finds redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the remission of his sins? Many persons that are not only upright of heart, but that fear, nay, and love God, have not spoken warily upon this head, not according to the oracles of

God. They have spoken of the work of sanctification, taking the word in its full sense, as if it were quite of another kind, as if it differed entirely from that which is wrought in justification. But this is a great and dangerous mistake, and has a natural tendency to make us undervalue that glorious work of God which was wrought in us when we were justified : whereas in that moment when we are justified freely by his grace, when we are accepted through the Beloved, we are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit. And there is as great a change wrought in our souls when we are born of the Spirit, as was wrought in our bodies when we were born of a woman. There is, in that hour, a general change from inward sinfulness to inward holiness. The love of the creature is changed to the love of the Creator ; the love of the world into the love of God. Earthly desires, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life, are in that instant changed, by the mighty power of God, into heavenly desires. The whirlwind of our will is stopped in its mid career, and sinks down into the will of God. Pride and haughtiness subside into lowliness of heart ; as do anger, with all turbulent and unruly passions, into calmness, meekness, and gentleness. In a word, the earthly, sensual, devilish mind gives place to "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

10. "Well, but what more than this can be implied in entire sanctification?" It does not imply any new *kind* of holiness : let no man imagine this. From the moment we are justified, till we give up our spirits to God, love is the fulfilling of the law ; of the whole evangelical law, which took place of the Adamic law, when the first promise of "the seed of the woman" was made. Love is the sum of Christian sanctification : it is the one *kind* of holiness, which is found, only in various *degrees*, in the believers who are distinguished by St. John into "little children, young men, and fathers." The difference between one and the other properly lies in the degree of love. And herein there is as great a difference

in the spiritual, as in the natural sense, between fathers, young men, and babes.

Every one that is born of God, though he be as yet only a "babe in Christ," has the love of God in his heart; the love of his neighbour; together with lowliness, meekness, and resignation. But all of these are then in a low degree, in proportion to the degree of his faith. The faith of a babe in Christ is weak, generally mingled with doubts or fears; with doubts, whether he has not deceived himself; or fear, that he shall not endure to the end. And if, in order to prevent those perplexing doubts, or to remove those tormenting fears, he catches hold of the opinion that a true believer cannot make shipwreck of the faith, experience will sooner or later show that it is merely the staff of a broken reed, which will be so far from sustaining him, that it will only enter into his hand and pierce it. But to return: In the same proportion as he grows in faith, he grows in holiness; he increases in love, lowliness, meekness, in every part of the image of God: till it pleases God, after he is thoroughly convinced of inbred sin, of the total corruption of his nature, to take it all away; to purify his heart, and cleanse him from all unrighteousness; to fulfil that promise which he made first to his ancient people, and in them to the Israel of God in all ages: "I will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."

It is not easy to conceive what a difference there is between that which he experiences now, and that which he experienced before. Till this universal change was wrought in his soul, all his holiness was *mixed*. He was humble, but not entirely; his humility was mixed with pride: he was meek; but his meekness was frequently interrupted by anger, or some uneasy and turbulent passion. His love of God was frequently damped, by the love of some creature; the love of his neighbour, by evil surmising, or some thought, if not temper, contrary to love. His will was not wholly melted down into

the will of God : but although in general he could say, "I come 'not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me ;'" yet, now and then nature rebelled, and he could not clearly say, "Lord, not as I will, but as thou wilt." His whole soul is now consistent with itself ; there is no jarring string. All his passions flow in a continual stream, with an even tenor to God. To him that is entered into this rest, you may truly say,—

"Calm thou ever art within,
All unruffled, all serene !"

There is no mixture of any contrary affections : all is peace and harmony after. Being filled with love, there is no more interruption of it than of the beating of his heart ; and continual love bringing continual joy in the Lord, he rejoices evermore. He converses continually with the God whom he loves, unto whom in every thing he gives thanks. And as he now loves God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind, and with all his strength ; so Jesus now reigns alone in his heart, the Lord of every motion there.

11. But it may be inquired, In what manner does God work this entire, this universal change in the soul of a believer ? this strange work, which so many will not believe, though we declare it unto them ? Does he work it gradually, by slow degrees ; or instantaneously, in a moment ? How many are the disputes upon this head, even among the children of God ! And so there will be, after all that ever was, or ever can be, said upon it. For many will still say, with the famous Jew, *Non persuadebis, etiamsi persuaseris* : that is, "Thou shalt not persuade me, though thou dost persuade me." And they will be the more resolute herein, because the Scriptures are silent upon the subject ; because the point is not determined, at least not in express terms, in any part of the oracles of God. Every man therefore may abound in his own sense, provided he will allow the same liberty to his neighbour ; provided he will not be angry at those who differ from his opinion, nor entertain

hard thoughts concerning them. Permit me likewise to add one thing more : Be the change instantaneous or gradual, see that you never rest till it is wrought in your own soul, if you desire to dwell with God in glory.

12. This premised, in order to throw what light I can upon this interesting question, I will simply relate what I have seen myself in the course of many years. Four or five and forty years ago, (when I had no distinct views of what the apostle meant by exhorting us to "leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection,") two or three persons in London, whom I knew to be truly sincere, desired to give me an account of their experience. It appeared exceeding strange, being different from any that I had heard before ; but exactly similar to the preceding account of entire sanctification. The next year, two or three more persons at Bristol, and two or three in Kingswood, coming to me severally, gave me exactly the same account of their experience. A few years after, I desired all those in London who made the same profession to come to me all together at the Foundery, that I might be thoroughly satisfied. I desired that man of God, Thomas Walsh, to give us the meeting there. When we met, first one of us, and then the other, asked them the most searching questions we could devise. They answered every one without hesitation, and with the utmost simplicity, so that we were fully persuaded they did not deceive themselves. In the years 1759, 1760, 1761, and 1762, their numbers multiplied exceedingly, not only in London and Bristol, but in various parts of Ireland as well as England. Not trusting to the testimony of others, I carefully examined most of these myself ; and in London alone, I found six hundred and fifty-two members of our society who were exceeding clear in their experience, and of whose testimony I could see no reason to doubt. I believe no year has passed since that time wherein God has not wrought the same work in many others ; but sometimes in one part of England or Ireland, sometimes in another ; "as the wind bloweth

where it listeth ;”—and every one of these (after the most careful inquiry, I have not found one exception either in Great Britain or Ireland) has declared that his deliverance from sin was *instantaneous*; that the change was wrought in a moment. Had half of these, or one-third, or one in twenty, declared it was *gradually* wrought in *them*, I should have believed this, with regard to *them*, and thought that *some* were gradually sanctified, and some instantaneously. But as I have not found, in so long a space of time, a single person speaking thus; as all who believe they are sanctified, declare with one voice, that the change was wrought in a moment; I cannot but believe that sanctification is commonly, if not always, an *instantaneous* work.

13. But however that question be decided, whether sanctification, in the full sense of the word, be wrought instantaneously or gradually, how may we attain to it? “What shall *we* do,” said the Jews to our Lord, “that we may work the works of God?” His answer will suit those that ask, What shall we do that this work of God may be wrought in us? “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” On this one work all the others depend. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and all his wisdom, and power, and faithfulness are engaged on thy side. In this, as in all other instances, “by grace we are saved through faith.” Sanctification too is “not of works, lest any man should boast.” “It is the gift of God,” and is to be received by plain, simple faith. Suppose you are now labouring to “abstain from all appearance of evil,” “zealous of good works,” and walking diligently and carefully in all the ordinances of God; there is then only one point remaining: the voice of God to your soul is, “Believe, and be saved.”* First, believe that God has *promised* to save you from all sin, and to fill you with all holiness. Secondly, believe that he is *able* “thus to save to the uttermost all that come unto God through him.” Third-

* See the Sermon on “The Scripture Way of Salvation.”

ly, believe that he is *willing*, as well as able to save *you* to the uttermost; to purify you from all sin, and fill up all your heart with love. Believe, fourthly, that he is not only able, but willing to do it *now*! Not when you come to die, not at any distant time; not to-morrow, but *to-day*. He will then enable you to believe *it is done*, according to his word; and then "patience shall have its perfect work; and ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

14. Ye shall then be perfect. The apostle seems to mean by this expression, *τελειοι*, ye shall be wholly delivered from every evil work; from every evil word; from every evil thought; yea, from every evil desire, passion, temper; from all inbred corruption; from all remains of the carnal mind, from the body of sin; and ye shall be renewed in the spirit of your mind, in every right temper, after the image of Him that created you, in righteousness and true holiness. Ye shall be *entire*, *ολοκληροι*: (the same word which the apostle uses to the Christians in Thessalonica :) this seems to refer not so much to the kind as to the degree of holiness; as if he had said, "Ye shall enjoy as high a degree of holiness as is consistent with your present state of pilgrimage;"—and ye shall *want nothing*; the Lord, being your Shepherd, your Father, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, your God, and your all, will feed you with the bread of heaven, and give you meat enough. He will lead you forth beside the waters of comfort, and keep you every moment: so that loving him with all your heart, (which is the sum of all perfection,) you will "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and in every thing give thanks," till "an abundant entrance is ministered unto you into his everlasting kingdom!"

SERMON LXXXIV

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION.

“What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”—MATT. xvi. 26.

1. THERE is a celebrated remark to this effect, (I think in the works of Mr. Pascal,) that if a man of low estate would speak of high things, as of what relates to kings or kingdoms, it is not easy for him to find suitable expressions, as he is so little acquainted with things of this nature; but if one of royal parentage speaks of royal things, of what concerns his own or his father's kingdom, his language will be free and easy, as these things are familiar to his thoughts. In like manner, if a mere inhabitant of this lower world speaks concerning the great things of the kingdom of God, hardly is he able to find expressions suitable to the greatness of the subject. But when the Son of God speaks of the highest things which concern his heavenly kingdom, all his language is easy and unlaboured, his words natural and unaffected; inasmuch as known unto him are all these things from all eternity.

2. How strongly is this remark exemplified in the passage now before us! The Son of God, the great King of heaven and earth, here uses the plainest and easiest words: but how high and deep are the things which he expresses therein! None of the children of men can fully conceive them, till, emerging out of the darkness of the present world, he commences an inhabitant of eternity.

3. But we may conceive a little of these deep things, if we consider, first, what is implied in that expression,

“A man’s *gaining* the whole world :” secondly, what is implied in *losing* his own soul : we shall then, thirdly, see, in the strongest light, what he is *profited*, who gains the whole world, and loses his own soul.

I. 1 We are, first, to consider, what is implied in a man’s *gaining* the whole world. Perhaps, at the first hearing, this may seem to some equivalent with conquering the whole world. But it has no relation thereto at all : and indeed that expression involves a plain absurdity. For it is impossible any that is born of a woman should ever conquer the whole world ; were it only because the short life of man could not suffice for so wild an undertaking. Accordingly, no man ever did conquer the half, no, nor the tenth part of the world. But whatever others might do, there was no danger that any of our Lord’s hearers should have any thought of this. Among all the sins of the Jewish nation, the desire of universal empire was not found. Even in their most flourishing times, they never sought to extend their conquests beyond the river Euphrates. And in our Lord’s time, all their ambition was at an end : “the sceptre was departed from Judah ;” and Judea was governed by a Roman procurator, as a branch of the Roman empire.

2. Leaving this, we may find a far more easy and natural sense of the expression. “To gain the whole world,” may properly enough imply, to gain all the pleasures which the world can give. The man we speak of may, therefore, be supposed to have gained all that will gratify his senses. In particular, all that can increase his pleasure of tasting ; all the elegancies of meat and drink ; likewise, whatever can gratify his smell, or touch ; all that he can enjoy in common with his fellow-brutes. He may have all the plenty and all the variety of these objects which the world can afford.

3. We may further suppose him to have gained all that gratifies “the desire of the eyes ;” whatever (by means of the eye chiefly) conveys any pleasure to the imagination. The pleasures of the imagination arise from three sources : grandeur, beauty, and novelty.

Accordingly, we find, by experience, our own imagination is gratified by surveying either grand, or beautiful, or uncommon objects. Let him be encompassed then with the most grand, the most beautiful, and the newest things that can anywhere be found. For all this is manifestly implied in a man's gaining the whole world.

4. But there is also another thing implied herein, which men of the most elevated spirits have preferred before all the pleasures of sense and imagination put together; that is honour, glory, renown :

Virūm volitare per ora.*

It seems, that hardly any principle of the human mind is of greater force than this. It triumphs over the strongest propensities of nature, over all our appetites and affections. If Brutus sheds the blood of his own children; if we see another Brutus, in spite of every possible obligation, in defiance of all justice and gratitude,

“Cringing while he stabs his friend;”

if a far greater man than either of these, Pascal Paoli, gave up ease, pleasure, every thing for a life of constant toil, pain, and alarms;—what principle could support them? They might talk of *amor patriæ*, the love of their country; but this would never have carried them through, had there not been also the

Laudum immensa cupido;

“the immense thirst of *praise*.” Now, the man we speak of has gained abundance of this: he is praised, if not admired, by all that are round about him. Nay, his name is gone forth into distant lands as it were, to the ends of the earth.

5. Add to this, that he has gained abundance of wealth; that there is no end of his treasures; that he has laid up silver as the dust, and gold as the sand of

* The following is Dryden's translation of this quotation from Virgil, and of the words connected with it:

“New ways I must attempt, my grovelling name
To raise aloft, and wing my flight to fame.”—EDR.

the sea. Now, when a man has obtained all these pleasures, all that will gratify either the senses or the imagination; when he has gained an honourable name, and also laid up much treasure for many years; then he may be said, in an easy, natural sense of the word, to "have gained the whole world."

II. 1. The next point we have to consider is, what is implied in a man's *losing* his own soul. But here we draw a deeper scene, and have need of a more steady attention. For it is easy to sum up all that is implied in a man's "*gaining* the whole world;" but it is not easy to understand all that is implied in his "losing his own soul." Indeed, none can fully conceive this, until he has passed through time into eternity.

2. The first thing which it undeniably implies is the losing all the present pleasures of religion; all those which it affords to truly religious men, even in the present life. "If there be any consolation in Christ; if any comfort of love,"—in the love of God, and of all mankind; if any "joy in the Holy Ghost;" if there be a peace of God,—a peace that passeth all understanding; if there be any rejoicing in the testimony of a good conscience toward God; it is manifest, all this is totally lost by the man that loses his own soul.

3. But the present life will soon be at an end: we know it passes away like a shadow. The hour is at hand, when the spirit will be summoned to return to God that gave it. In that awful moment,

"Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view,
Who stand upon the threshold of the new."

And whether he looks backward or forward, how pleasing is the prospect to him that saves his soul! If he looks back, he has "the calm remembrance of a life well spent." If he looks forward, there is an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; and he sees the convoy of angels ready to carry him into Abraham's bosom. But how is it in that solemn hour with the man that loses his soul? Does he look back? What comfort is there in this? He sees nothing but scenes of horror, matter of shame, remorse and self-condemnation; a fore-

taste of the "worm that never dieth." If he looks forward, what does he see? No joy, no peace! no gleam of hope from any point of heaven! Some years since, one who turned back as a dog to his vomit was struck in his mid career of sin. A friend visiting him, prayed, "Lord, have mercy upon those who are just stepping out of the body, and know not which shall meet them at their entrance into the other world, an angel or a fiend!" The sick man shrieked out with a piercing cry, "A fiend! a fiend!" and died. Just such an end, unless he die like an ox, may any man expect who loses his own soul.

4. But in what situation is the spirit of a good man, at his entrance into eternity? See

"The convoy attends,
The ministering host of invisible friends."

They receive the new-born spirit, and conduct him safe into Abraham's bosom; into the delights of paradise; the garden of God, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines. It is but one of a thousand commendations of this antechamber of heaven, that "there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest." For there they have numberless sources of happiness which they could not have upon earth. There they meet with "the glorious dead of ancient days." They converse with Adam, first of men; with Noah, first of the new world; with Abraham, the friend of God; with Moses and the prophets; with the apostles of the Lamb; with the saints of all ages; and above all, they are with Christ.

5. How different, alas! is the case with him who loses his own soul! The moment he steps into eternity, he meets with the devil and his angels. Sad convoy into the world of spirits! Sad earnest of what is to come! And either he is bound with chains of darkness, and reserved unto the judgment of the great day; or, at best, he wanders up and down, seeking rest, but finding none. Perhaps he may seek it (like the unclean spirit cast out of the man) in dry, dreary, desolate places; perhaps

"When nature all in ruins lies,
And owns her sov'reign, Death."

And little comfort can he find here ! seeing every thing contributes to increase, not remove, the fearful expectation of fiery indignation, which will devour the ungodly.

6. For even this is to him but the beginning of sorrows. Yet a little while, and he will see "the great white throne coming down from heaven, and him that sitteth thereon, from whose face the heavens and the earth flee away, and there is found no place for them." And "the dead, small and great, stand before God, and are judged, every one according to his works." "Then shall the king say to them on his right hand," (God grant he may say so to YOU !) "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And the angels shall tune their harps, and sing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, that the heirs of glory may come in." And then shall they "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever."

7 How different will be the lot of him that loses his own soul ! No joyful sentence will be pronounced on him, but one that will pierce him through with unutterable horror : (God forbid, that ever it should be pronounced on any of you that are here before God !) "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels !" And who can doubt, but those infernal spirits will immediately execute the sentence ; will instantly drag those forsaken of God into their own place of torment ! into those

"Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
And rest can never dwell ! Hope never comes,
That comes to all,"—

all the children of men who are on this side eternity. But not to them : the gulf is now fixed, over which they cannot pass. From the moment wherein they are once plunged into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone, their torments are not only without intermission, but likewise without end. For "they have no rest, day or

night; but the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever!"

III. Upon ever so cursory a view of these things, would not any one be astonished, that a man, that a creature endued with reason, should voluntarily choose, —I say *choose*; for God forces no man into inevitable damnation; he never yet

"Consign'd one unborn soul to hell,
Or damn'd him from his mother's womb,"—

should choose thus to lose his own soul, though it were to gain the whole world! For what shall a man be profited thereby, upon the whole of the account?

But, a little to abate our astonishment at this, let us observe the suppositions which a man generally makes before he can reconcile himself to this fatal choice.

1. He supposes, first, that "a life of religion is a life of misery." *That religion is misery!* How is it possible that any one should entertain so strange a thought? Do any of *you* imagine this? If you do, the reason is plain; you know not what religion is. "No! but I do, as well as you."—What is it then? "Why, the doing no harm." Not so: many birds and beasts do no harm; yet they are not capable of religion. "Then it is going to church and sacrament." Indeed it is not. This may be an excellent help to religion; and every one who desires to save his soul should attend them at all opportunities; yet it is possible you may attend them all your days, and still have no religion at all. Religion is a higher and deeper thing than any outward ordinance whatever.

2. What is religion then? It is easy to answer, if we consult the oracles of God. According to these, it lies in one single point: it is neither more nor less than love; it is love which "is the fulfilling of the law, the end of the commandment." Religion is the love of God and our neighbour; that is, every man under heaven. This love ruling the whole life, animating all our tempers and passions, directing all our thoughts, words, and actions, is, "pure religion and undefiled."

3. Now, will any one be so hardy as to say, that love is misery? Is it misery to love God? to give Him my heart who alone is worthy of it? Nay, it is the truest happiness; indeed, the only true happiness which is to be found under the sun. So does all experience prove the justness of that reflection which was made long ago, "Thou hast made us for thyself; and our heart cannot rest, until it resteth in thee." Or does any one imagine, the love of our neighbour is misery; even the loving every man as our own soul? So far from it, that, next to the love of God, this affords the greatest happiness of which we are capable. Therefore,

"Let not the stoic boast his mind unmoved,
The brute philosopher, who ne'er has proved
The joy of loving, or of being loved."

4. So much every reasonable man must allow. But he may object, "There is more than this implied in religion. It implies not only the love of God and man; (against which I have no objection;) but also a great deal of doing and suffering. And how can this be consistent with happiness?"

There is certainly some truth in this objection. Religion does imply both doing and suffering. Let us then calmly consider, whether this impairs or heightens our happiness.

Religion implies, first, the doing many things. For the love of God will naturally lead us, at all opportunities, to converse with Him we love; to speak to Him in public or private prayer; and to hear the words of His mouth, which "are dearer to us than thousands of gold and silver." It will incline us to lose no opportunity of receiving

"The dear memorials of our dying Lord;"

to continue instant in thanksgiving; at morning, evening, and noonday to praise Him. But suppose we do all this, will it lessen our happiness? Just the reverse. It is plain, all these fruits of love are means of increasing the love from which they spring; and of consequence they increase our happiness in the same proportion. Who then would not join in that wish?—

“Rising to sing my Saviour’s praise,
 Thee may I publish all day long:
 And let thy precious word of grace
 Flow from my heart, and fill my tongue;
 Fill all my life with purest love,
 And join me to thy church above!”

5. It must also be allowed, that as the love of God naturally leads to works of piety, so the love of our neighbour naturally leads all that feel it to works of mercy. It inclines us to feed the hungry; to clothe the naked; to visit them that are sick or in prison; to be as eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; a husband to the widow, a father to the fatherless. But can you suppose, that the doing this will prevent or lessen your happiness? yea, though you did so much, as to be like a guardian angel to all that are round about you? On the contrary, it is an infallible truth, that

“All worldly joys are less
 Than that one joy of doing kindnesses.”

A man of pleasure was asked some years ago, “Captain, what was the greatest pleasure you ever had?” After a little pause, he replied, “When we were upon our march in Ireland, in a very hot day, I called at a cabin on the road, and desired a little water. The woman brought me a cup of milk. I gave her a piece of silver; and the joy that poor creature expressed gave me the greatest pleasure I ever had in my life.” Now, if the doing good gave so much pleasure to one who acted merely from natural generosity, how much more must it give to one who does it on a nobler principle,—the joint love of God and his neighbour? It remains, that the doing all which religion requires will not lessen, but immensely increase, our happiness.

6. “Perhaps this may also be allowed. But religion implies, according to the Christian account, not only doing but *suffering*. And how can suffering be consistent with happiness?” Perfectly well. Many centuries ago, it was remarked by St. Chrysostom, “The Christian has his sorrows as well as his joys: but his

sorrow is sweeter than joy." He may accidentally suffer loss, poverty, pain : but in all these things he is more than conqueror. He can testify,—

"Labour is rest, and pain is sweet,
While thou, my God, art here."

He can say, "The Lord gave; the Lord taketh away : blessed be the name of the Lord !" He must suffer, more or less, reproach : for "the servant is not above his Master : " but so much the more does "the Spirit of glory and of God rest upon him." Yea, love itself will, on several occasions, be the source of suffering : the love of God will frequently produce

"The pleasing smart,
The meltings of a broken heart."

And the love of our neighbour will give rise to sympathizing sorrow : it will lead us to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction ; to be tenderly concerned for the distressed, and to "mix our pitying tears with those that weep." But may we not well say, These are "tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven?" So far then are all these sufferings from either preventing or lessening our happiness, that they greatly contribute thereto, and, indeed, constitute no inconsiderable part of it. So that, upon the whole, there cannot be a more false supposition, than that a life of religion is a life of misery ; seeing true religion, whether considered in its nature or its fruits, is true and solid happiness.

7. The man who chooses to gain the world by the loss of his soul, supposes, secondly, that "a life of wickedness is a life of happiness!" *That wickedness is happiness!* Even an old heathen poet could have taught him better. Even Juvenal discovered, *Nemo malus felix* : "No wicked man is happy." And how expressly does God himself declare, "There is no peace to the wicked!" no peace of mind : and without this there can be no happiness.

But, not to avail ourselves of authority, let us weigh the thing in the balance of reason. I ask, What can

make a wicked man happy? You answer, "He has gained the whole world." We allow it: and what does this imply? He has gained all that gratifies the senses: in particular, all that can please the taste; all the delicacies of meat and drink. True; but can eating and drinking make a man happy? They never did yet: and certain it is, they never will. This is too coarse food for an immortal spirit. But suppose it did give him a poor kind of happiness, during those moments wherein he was swallowing; what will he do with the residue of his time? Will it not hang heavy upon his hands? Will he not groan under many a tedious hour, and think swift-winged time flies too slow? If he is not fully employed, will he not frequently complain of lowness of spirits? an unmeaning expression; which the miserable physician usually no more understands than his miserable patient. We know there are such things as nervous disorders. But we know, likewise, that what is commonly called *nervous lowness* is a secret reproof from God; a kind of consciousness that we are not in our place; that we are not as God would have us to be: we are unhinged from our proper centre.

8. To remove, or at least soothe, this strange uneasiness, let him add the pleasures of imagination. Let him bedaub himself with silver and gold, and adorn himself with all the colours of the rainbow. Let him build splendid palaces, and furnish them in the most elegant as well as costly manner. Let him lay out walks and gardens, beautified with all that nature and art can afford. And how long will these give him pleasure? Only as long as they are new. As soon as ever the novelty is gone, the pleasure is gone also. After he has surveyed them a few months, or years, they give him no more satisfaction. The man who is saving his soul, has the advantage of him in this very respect. For he can say,

"In the pleasures the rich man's possessions display,
Unenvied I challenge my part;
While every fair object my eye can survey
Contributes to gladden my heart."

9. "However, he has yet another resource : *applause, glory*. And will not this make him happy?" It will not : for he cannot be applauded by all men ; no man ever was. Some will praise ; perhaps many ; but not all. It is certain some will blame : and he that is fond of applause will feel more pain from the censure of one, than pleasure from the praise of many. So that whoever seeks happiness in applause will infallibly be disappointed, and will find, upon the whole of the account, abundantly more pain than pleasure.

10. But to bring the matter to a short issue. Let us take an instance of one who had gained more of this world than probably any man now alive, unless he be a sovereign prince. But did all he had gained make him happy? Answer for thyself! Then said Haman, Yet "all this profiteth me nothing, while I see Mordecai sitting at the gate." Poor Haman! One unholy temper, whether pride, envy, jealousy, or revenge, gave him more pain, more vexation of spirit, than all the world could give pleasure. And so it must be in the nature of things ; for all unholy tempers are unhappy tempers. Ambition, covetousness, vanity, inordinate affection, malice, revengefulness, carry their own punishment with them, and avenge themselves on the soul wherein they dwell. Indeed, what are these, more especially when they are combined with an awakened conscience, but the dogs of hell, already gnawing the soul, forbidding happiness to approach? Did not even the heathens see this? What else means their fable of Tityus, chained to a rock, with a vulture continually tearing up his breast, and feeding upon his liver? *Quid rides?* "Why do you smile?" says the poet:

Mutato nomine, de te
Fabula narratur.

"It is another name ; but thou art the man!" Lust, foolish desire, envy, malice, or anger is now tearing thy breast : love of money, or of praise, hatred, or revenge is now feeding on thy poor spirit. Such happiness is in

vice ! So vain is the supposition that a life of wickedness is a life of happiness.

11. But he makes a third supposition,—that he shall certainly live forty, or fifty, or threescore years. Do *you* depend upon this ? on living threescore years ? Who told you that you should ? It is no other than the enemy of God and man : it is the murderer of souls. Believe him not : he was a liar from the beginning ; from the beginning of his rebellion against God. He is eminently a liar in this : for he would not give you life if he could. Would God permit, he would make sure work, and just now hurry you to his own place. And he cannot give you life, if he would : the breath of man is not in his hands. He is not the disposer of life and death ; that power belongs to the Most High. It is possible, indeed, God may, on some occasions, permit him to inflict death. I do not know but it was an evil angel who smote an hundred fourscore and five thousand Assyrians in one night : and the fine lines of our poet are as applicable to an evil as to a good spirit :—

“So when an angel by divine command
Hurls death and terror o’er a guilty land ;
He, pleased the Almighty’s order to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind, and directs the storm.”

But though Satan may sometimes inflict death, I know not that he could ever give life. It was one of his most faithful servants that shrieked out some years ago, “A week’s life ! A week’s life ! Thirty thousand pounds for a week’s life !” But he could not purchase a day’s life. That night, God required his soul of him. And how soon may he require it of you ? Are you sure of living threescore years ? Are you sure of living one year, one week, one day ? Oh, make haste to live ? Surely the man that may die to-night should live to-day.

12. So absurd are all the suppositions made by him who gains the world and loses his soul. But let us for a moment imagine, that wickedness is happiness ; and that he shall certainly live threescore years ; and still I would ask, what is he profited, if he gain the whole

world for threescore years, and then lose his soul eternally ?

Can such a choice be made by any that considers what eternity is ? Philip Melancthon, the most learned of all the German Reformers, gives the following relation : (I pass no judgment upon it, but set it down nearly in his own words :)—"When I was at Wirttemberg, as I was walking out one summer evening with several of my fellow-students, we heard an uncommon singing, and, following the sound, saw a bird of an uncommon figure. One stepping up, asked, 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, what art thou ?' It answered, 'I am a damned spirit;' and, in vanishing away, pronounced these words, 'O Eternity, Eternity ! who can tell the length of Eternity ?' ". And how soon would this be the language of him who sold his soul for threescore years' pleasure ! How soon would he cry out, "O Eternity, Eternity ! who can tell the length of Eternity ?"

13. In how striking a manner is this illustrated by one of the ancient fathers ! "Supposing there was a ball of sand as big as the whole earth. Suppose a grain of this to be annihilated in a thousand years : which would be more eligible,—to be happy while this ball was wasting away at the rate of one grain in a thousand years, and miserable ever after ?—or to be miserable, while it was wasting away at that proportion, and happy ever after ?" A wise man, it is certain, could not pause one moment upon the choice ; seeing all that time wherein this ball would be wasting away bears infinitely less proportion to eternity, than a drop of water to the whole ocean, or a grain of sand to the whole mass. Allowing, then, that a life of religion were a life of misery ; that a life of wickedness were a life of happiness ; and, that a man were assured of enjoying that happiness for the term of threescore years ; yet what would he be profited, if he were then to be miserable to all eternity ?

14. But it has been proved, that the case is quite otherwise ; that religion is happiness ; that wickedness is misery ; and that no man is assured of living three-

score days : and if so, is there any fool, any madman under heaven, who can be compared to him that casts away his own soul, though it were to gain the whole world ? For what is the real state of the case ? What is the choice which God proposes to his creatures ? It is not, " Will you be happy threescore years, and then miserable for ever ; or, will you be miserable threescore years, and then happy for ever ? " It is not, " Will you have first a temporary heaven, and then hell eternal ; or, will you have first a temporary hell, and then heaven eternal ? " But it is simply this : " Will you be miserable threescore years, and miserable ever after ? or, will you be happy threescore years, and happy ever after ? Will you have a foretaste of heaven now, and then heaven for ever ; or, will you have a foretaste of hell now, and then hell for ever ? Will you have two hells, or two heavens ? "

15. One would think, there needed no great sagacity to answer this question. And this is the very question which I now propose to you in the name of God. Will you be happy here and hereafter ; in the world that now is, and in that which is to come ? Or will you be miserable here and hereafter ; in time and in eternity ? What is your choice ? Let there be no delay : now take one or the other ! I take heaven and earth to record this day, that I set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Oh, choose life ! the life of peace and love, now ; the life of glory for ever ! By the grace of God, now choose that better part which shall never be taken from you ! And, having once fixed your choice, never draw back ; adhere to it at all events. Go on in the name of the Lord, whom ye have chosen, and in the power of his might ! In spite of all opposition, from nature, from the world, from all the powers of darkness, still fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life ! And then there is laid up for you a crown, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give you at that day !

SERMON LXXXV.

ON WORKING OUT OUR OWN SALVATION

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—PHILIPPIANS ii. 12, 13.

1. SOME great truths, as the being and attributes of God, and the difference between moral good and evil, were known, in some measure, to the heathen world. The traces of them are to be found in all nations: so that, in some sense, it may be said to every child of man, “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; even to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” With this truth he has, in some measure, “enlightened every one that cometh into the world.” And hereby they that “have not the law,” that have no written law, “are a law unto themselves.” They show “the work of the law,”—the substance of it, though not the letter,—“written in their hearts,” by the same hand which wrote the commandments on the tables of stone: “Their conscience also bearing them witness,” whether they act suitably thereto or not.

2. But there are two grand heads of doctrine, which contain many truths of the most important nature, of which the most enlightened heathens in the ancient world were totally ignorant; as are also the most intelligent heathens that are now on the face of the earth; I mean those which relate to the eternal Son of God, and the Spirit of God: to the Son, giving himself to be “a propitiation for the sins of the world;” and to the Spirit of God, renewing man in that image of God

wherein they were created. For, after all the pains which ingenious and learned men have taken (that great man Chevalier Ramsay, in partieuclar) to find some resemblance of these truths in the immense rubbish of heathen authors, the resemblance is so exceeding faint, as not to be discerned but by a very lively imagination. Beside that, even this resemblance, faint as it was, is only to be found in the discourses of a very few; and those were the most improved and deeply-thinking men, in their several generations; while the innumerable multitudes that surrounded them were little better for the knowledge of the philosophers, but remained as totally ignorant even of these capital truths as were the beasts that perish.

3. Certain it is, that these truths were never known to the vulgar, the bulk of mankind, to the generality of men in any nation, till they were brought to light by the gospel. Notwithstanding a spark of knowledge glimmering here and there, the whole earth was covered with darkness, till the Sun of Righteousness arose and scattered the shades of night. Since this day-spring from on high has appeared, a great light hath shined unto those who, till then, sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. And thousands of them in every age have known, "that God so loved the world, as to give his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And being entrusted with the oracles of God, they have known that God hath also given us his Holy Spirit, who "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

4. How remarkable are those words of the apostle, which precede these! "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God,"—the incommunicable nature of God from eternity,—*"counted it no act of robbery"*—(that is the precise meaning of the word,) no invasion of any other's prerogative, but his own unquestionable right—"to be equal with God." This word implies both the *fulness* and the supreme *height* of the Godhead; to which are opposed the two words, he *emptied* and he *humbled him-*

self. He “emptied himself” of that divine fulness, veiled his fulness from the eyes of men and angels; “taking”—and by that very act emptying himself—“the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of man,” a real man, like other men. “And being found in fashion as a man,”—a common man, without any peculiar beauty or excellency,—“he humbled himself” to a still greater degree, “becoming obedient” to God, though equal with him, “even unto death; yea, the death of the cross:” the greatest instance both of humiliation and obedience.

Having proposed the example of Christ, the apostle exhorts them to secure the salvation which Christ hath purchased for them: “Wherefore work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

In these comprehensive words, we may observe,

I. That grand truth, which ought never to be out of our remembrance: “It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”

II. The improvement we ought to make of it: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

III. The connection between them: “It is God that worketh it in you;” therefore, “work out your own salvation.”

I. 1. First. We are to observe that great and important truth which ought never to be out of our remembrance: “It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” The meaning of these words may be made more plain by a small transposition of them: “It is God that of his good pleasure worketh in you both to will and to do.” This position of the words, connecting the phrase, *of his good pleasure*, with the word, *worketh*, removes all imagination of merit from man, and gives God the whole glory of his work. Otherwise, we might have had some room for boasting, as if it were our own desert, some goodness in us, or some good thing done by us, which first

moved God to work. But this expression cuts off all such vain conceits, and clearly shows his motive to work lay wholly in himself, in his own mere grace, in his unmerited mercy.

2. It is by this alone he is impelled to work in man both to will and to do. The expression is capable of two interpretations; both of which are unquestionably true. First, *to will*, may include the whole of inward, *to do*, the whole of outward, religion. If it be thus understood, it implies, that it is God that worketh both inward and outward holiness. Secondly, *to will*, may imply every good desire; *to do*, whatever results therefrom. And then the sentence means, God breathes into us every good desire, and brings every good desire to good effect.

3. The original words, *το θελειν* and *το ενεργειν*, seem to favour the latter construction: *το θελειν*, which we render *to will*, plainly including every good desire, whether relating to our tempers, words, or actions; to inward or outward holiness. And *το ενεργειν*, which we render *to do*, manifestly implies all that power from on high, all that energy which works in us every right disposition, and then furnishes us for every good word and work.

4. Nothing can so directly tend to hide pride from man as a deep, lasting conviction of this. For if we are thoroughly sensible that we have nothing which we have not received, how can we glory as if we had not received it? If we know and feel that the very first motion of good is from above, as well as the power which conducts it to the end; if it is God that not only infuses every good desire, but that accompanies and follows it, else it vanishes away; then it evidently follows, that "he who glorieth" must "glory in the Lord."

II. 1. Proceed we now to the second point: If God worketh in you, then work out your own salvation. The original word, rendered *work out*, implies the doing a thing thoroughly. *Your own*; for you yourselves must do this, or it will be left undone for ever. *Your own*

salvation : salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) *preventing grace* ; including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life ; some degree of salvation ; the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by *convincing grace*, usually in Scripture termed *repentance* ; which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a further deliverance from the heart of stone. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation ; whereby, “through grace,” we “are saved by faith ;” consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God ; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God. All experience, as well as Scripture, shows this salvation to be both instantaneous and gradual. It begins the moment we are justified, in the holy, humble, gentle, patient love of God and man. It gradually increases from that moment, as “a grain of mustard-seed, which, at first, is the least of all seeds,” but afterwards puts forth large branches, and becomes a great tree ; till, in another instant, the heart is cleansed from all sin, and filled with pure love to God and man. But even that love increases more and more, till we “grow up in all things into Him—that is our Head ;” till we attain “the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

2. But how are we to *work out* this salvation ? The apostle answers, “With fear and trembling.” There is another passage of St. Paul, wherein the same expression occurs, which may give light to this : “Servants, obey your masters according to the flesh,”—according to the present state of things, although sensible that in a little time the servant will be free from his master,—“with fear and trembling.” This is a proverbial expression, which cannot be understood

literally. For what master could bear, much less require, his servant to stand trembling and quaking before him? And the following words utterly exclude this meaning: "In singleness of heart;" with a single eye to the will and providence of God; "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;" doing whatever they do as the will of God, and therefore with their might. (Eph. vi. 5, &c.) It is easy to see that these strong expressions of the apostle clearly imply two things: first, that every thing be done with the utmost earnestness of spirit, and with all care and caution: (perhaps more directly referring to the former word, *μετα φόβου*, *with fear*;) secondly, that it be done with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness; not improbably referring to the latter word, *μετα τρομου*, *with trembling*.

3. How easily may we transfer this to the business of life, the working out our own salvation! With the same temper, and in the same manner, that Christian servants serve their masters that are upon earth, let other Christians labour to serve their Master that is in heaven; that is, first, with the utmost earnestness of spirit, with all possible care and caution; and, secondly, with the utmost diligence, speed, punctuality, and exactness.

4. But what are the steps which the Scriptures direct us to take, in the working out of our own salvation? The prophet Isaiah gives us a general answer, touching the first steps which we are to take: "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." If ever you desire that God should work in you that faith whereof cometh both present and eternal salvation, by the grace already given, fly from all sin as from the face of a serpent; carefully avoid every evil word and work; yea, abstain from all appearance of evil. "And learn to do well:" be zealous of good works, of works of piety, as well as works of mercy. Use family prayer, and cry to God in secret. Fast in secret, and "your Father which seeth in secret, he will

reward you openly." "Search the Scriptures:" hear them in public, read them in private, and meditate therein. At every opportunity, be a partaker of the Lord's supper. "Do this in remembrance" of him; and he will meet you at his own table. Let your conversation be with the children of God; and see that it "be in grace, seasoned with salt." As ye have time, do good unto all men; to their souls and to their bodies. And herein "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." It then only remains, that ye deny yourselves and take up your cross daily. Deny yourselves every pleasure which does not prepare you for taking pleasure in God, and willingly embrace every means of drawing near to God, though it be a cross, though it be grievous to flesh and blood. Thus when you have redemption in the blood of Christ, you will "go on to perfection;" till, "walking in the light as he is in the light," you are enabled to testify, that "he is faithful and just," not only to "forgive" your "sins," but to "cleans" you "from all unrighteousness."

III. 1. "But," say some, "what connection is there between the former and the latter clause of this sentence? Is there not rather a flat opposition between the one and the other? If it is God that worketh in us both to will and to do, what need is there of *our* working? Does not His working thus supersede the necessity of our working at all? Nay, does it not render our working impracticable, as well as unnecessary? For if we allow that God does all, what is there left for us to do?"

2. Such is the reasoning of flesh and blood. And, at first hearing, it is exceeding plausible. But it is not solid; as will evidently appear, if we consider the matter more deeply. We shall then see there is no opposition between these, "God works; therefore, do ye work;" but, on the contrary, the closest connection; and that in two respects. For, first, God works; therefore you *can* work: secondly, God works, therefore you *must* work.

3. First. God worketh in you; therefore, you *can* work: otherwise it would be impossible. If he did not work, it would be impossible for you to work out your own salvation. "With man this is impossible," saith our Lord, "for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." ~ Yea, it is impossible for any man, for any that is born of a woman, unless God work in him. Seeing all men are, by nature, not only sick, but "dead in trespasses and in sins," it is not possible for them to do any thing well till God raises them from the dead. It was impossible for Lazarus to come forth, till the Lord had given him life. And it is equally impossible for us to *come* out of our sins, yea, or to make the least motion toward it, till He who hath all power in heaven and earth calls our dead souls into life.

4. Yet this is no excuse for those who continue in sin, and lay the blame upon their Maker, by saying, "It is God only that must quicken us; for we cannot quicken our own souls." For, allowing that all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*, this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called *natural science*. But this is not natural: it is more properly termed, *preventing grace*. Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man. Every one has, sooner or later, good desires; although the generality of men stifle them before they can strike deep root, or produce any considerable fruit. Every one has some measure of that light, some faint glimmering ray, which, sooner or later, more or less, enlightens every man that cometh into the world. And every one, unless he be one of the small number whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron, feels more or less uneasy when he acts contrary to the light of his own conscience. So that no man sins because he has not grace, but because he does not use the *grace which he hath*.

5. Therefore, inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without any merit of yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfil all righteousness. It is possible for you to "love God, because he hath first loved us;" and to "walk in love," after the pattern of our great Master. We know, indeed, that word of his to be absolutely true: "Without me ye can do nothing." But, on the other hand, we know, every believer can say, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

6. Meantime, let us remember that God has joined these together in the experience of every believer; and therefore we must take care, not to imagine they are ever to be put asunder. We must beware of that mock humility which teacheth us to say, in excuse for our wilful disobedience, "Oh, I can do nothing!" and stops there, without once naming the grace of God. Pray, think twice. Consider what you say. I hope you wrong yourself; for if it be really true that you can do nothing, then you have no faith. And if you have not faith, you are in a wretched condition: you are not in a state of salvation. Surely it is not so. You can do something, through Christ strengthening you. Stir up the spark of grace which is now in you, and he will give you more grace.

7 Secondly. God worketh in you: therefore you *must* work: you must be "workers together with him," (they are the very words of the apostle,) otherwise he will cease working. The general rule on which his gracious dispensations invariably proceed is this: "Unto him that hath shall be given: but from him that hath not,"—that does not improve the grace already given,— "shall be taken away what he assuredly hath." (So the words ought to be rendered.) Even St. Augustine, who is generally supposed to favour the contrary doctrine, makes that just remark, *Qui fecit nos sine nobis, non salvabit nos sine nobis*: "He that made us without ourselves, will not save us without ourselves." He will not

save us unless we "save ourselves from this untoward generation;" unless we ourselves "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life;" unless we "agonize to enter in at the strait gate," "deny ourselves, and take up our cross daily," and labour by every possible means to "make our own calling and election sure."

8. "Labour," then, brethren, "not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life." Say with our blessed Lord, though in a somewhat different sense, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." In consideration that he still worketh in you, be never "weary of well-doing." Go on, in virtue of the grace of God, preventing, accompanying, and following you, in "the work of faith, in the patience of hope, and the labour of love." "Be ye steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And "the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of his sheep," (Jesus,) "make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever!"

SERMON LXXXVI.

A CALL TO BACKSLIDERS.

"Will the Lord absent himself for ever? And will he be no more entreated?"

"Is his mercy clean gone for ever? And is his promise come utterly to an end for evermore?"—Ps. lxxvii. 7, 8.

1. PRESUMPTION is one grand snare of the devil, in which many of the children of men are taken. They so presume upon the mercy of God as utterly to forget his justice. Although he has expressly declared, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," yet they flatter themselves, that in the end God will be better than his word. They imagine they may live and die in their sins, and nevertheless "escape the damnation of hell."

2. But although there are many that are destroyed by presumption, there are still more that perish by despair. I mean, by want of hope; by thinking it impossible that they should escape destruction. Having many times fought against their spiritual enemies, and always been overcome, they lay down their arms; they no more contend, as they have no hope of victory. Knowing, by melancholy experience, that they have no power of themselves to help themselves, and having no expectation that God will help them, they lie down under their burden: they no longer strive; for they suppose it is impossible they should attain.

3. In this case, as in a thousand others, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, but a stranger intermeddleth not with his grief." It is not easy for those to know

it who never felt it: for "who knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him?" Who knoweth, unless by his own experience, what this sort of *wounded spirit* means? Of consequence, there are few that know how to sympathize with them that are under this sore temptation. There are few that have duly considered the ease; few that are not deceived by appearances. They see men go on in a course of sin, and take it for granted, it is out of mere presumption: whereas, in reality, it is from the quite contrary principle;—it is out of mere despair. Either they have no hope at all,—and while that is the case, they do not strive at all; or they have some intervals of hope,—and while that lasts, "strive for the mastery." But that hope soon fails: they then cease to strive, and "are taken captive of Satan at his will."

4. This is frequently the case with those that began to run well, but soon tired in the heavenly road; with those in particular who once "saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," but afterwards grieved his Holy Spirit, and made shipwreck of the faith. Indeed, many of these rush into sin, as a horse into the battle. They sin with so high a hand, as utterly to quench the Holy Spirit of God; so that he gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and lets them follow their own imaginations. And those who are thus given up may be quite stupid, without either fear, or sorrow, or care; utterly easy and unconcerned about God, or heaven, or hell; to which the god of this world contributes not a little, by blinding and hardening their hearts. But still even these would not be so careless, were it not for despair. The great reason why they have no sorrow or care is, because they have no hope. They verily believe they have so provoked God, that "he will be no more entreated."

5. And yet we need not utterly give up even these. We have known some even of the careless ones whom God has visited again, and restored to their first love. But we may have much more hope for those backsliders

who are not careless, who are still uneasy;—those who fain would escape out of the snare of the devil, but think it is impossible. They are fully convinced they cannot save themselves, and believe God *will* not save them. They believe he has irrevocably “shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure.” They fortify themselves in believing this, by abundance of reasons; and unless those reasons are clearly removed, they cannot hope for any deliverance.

It is in order to relieve those hopeless, helpless souls, that I propose, with God’s assistance,

First, To inquire what the chief of those reasons are, some or other of which induce so many backsliders to cast away hope; to suppose that God hath forgotten to be gracious. And,

Secondly, To give a clear and full answer to each of those reasons.

I. I am, first, to inquire, what the chief of those reasons are which induce so many backsliders to think that God hath forgotten to be gracious. I do not say *all* the reasons; for innumerable are those which either their own evil hearts, or that old serpent, will suggest but the chief of them,—those that are most plausible, and therefore most common.

1. The first argument which induces many backsliders to believe that “the Lord will be no more entreated,” is drawn from the very reason of the thing: “If,” say they, “a man rebel against an earthly prince, many times, he dies for the first offence; he pays his life for the first transgression. Yet, possibly, if the crime be extenuated by some favourable circumstances, or if strong intercession be made for him, his life may be given him. But if, after a full and free pardon, he were guilty of rebelling a second time, who would dare to intercede for him? He must expect no further mercy. Now, if one rebelling against an earthly king, after he has been freely pardoned once, cannot with any colour of reason hope to be forgiven a second time; what must be the case of him that, after having been freely pardoned for

rebellling against the great King of heaven and earth, rebels against him again? What can be expected, but that 'vengeance will come upon him to the uttermost?'"

II. 1. This argument, drawn from reason, they enforce by several passages of Scripture. One of the strongest of these is that which occurs in the First Epistle of St. John: (v. 16 :) "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and God shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death. I do not say that he shall pray for it."

Hence they argue: "Certainly, *I do not say that he shall pray for it*," is equivalent with, *I say he shall not pray for it*. So the apostle supposes him that has committed this sin to be in a desperate state indeed! So desperate, that we may not even pray for his forgiveness; we may not ask life for him: and what may we more reasonably suppose to be a sin unto death, than a wilful rebellion, after a full and free pardon?

2. "Consider, secondly," say they, "those terrible passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews; one of which occurs in the sixth chapter, the other in the tenth. To begin with the latter: 'If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins: but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, courted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance is mine: I will recompense, saith the Lord. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!' (Verses 26-31.) Now, is it not here expressly declared by the Holy Ghost, that our case is desperate? Is it not declared, that 'if, after we

have received the knowledge of the truth,' after we have experimentally known it, 'we sin wilfully,'—which we have undoubtedly done, and that over and over,—'there remaineth no other sacrifice for sin; but a certain looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries?'

3. "And is not that passage in the sixth chapter exactly parallel with this? 'It is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,—if they fall away,' (literally, *and have fallen away*), 'to renew them again unto repentance: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.' (Verses 4–6.)

4. "It is true, some are of opinion, that those words, *it is impossible*, are not to be taken literally, as denoting absolute impossibility; but a very great difficulty. But it does not appear that we have any sufficient reason to depart from the literal meaning; as it neither implies any absurdity, nor contradicts any other scriptures. Does not this, then," say they, "cut off all hope; seeing we have, undoubtedly, 'tasted of that heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost?' How is it possible to 'renew us again to repentance;' to an entire change both of heart and life? seeing we have crucified to ourselves 'the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.'

5. "A yet more dreadful passage, if possible, than this, is that in the twelfth chapter of St. Matthew: 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.' (Verses 31, 32.) Exactly parallel to these are the words of our Lord, which are recited by St. Mark: 'Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies where

with soever they blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, but is in danger of eternal damnation. (Matt. 28, 29.)

6. "It has been the judgment of some that all these passages point at one and the same sin; that not only the words of our Lord, but those of St. John, concerning 'the sin unto death,' and those of St. Paul, concerning 'crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace,' all refer to the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; the only sin that shall never be forgiven. Whether they do or no, it must be allowed that this blasphemy is absolutely unpardonable; and that, consequently, for those who have been guilty of this, God 'will be no more entreated.'"

7. To confirm those arguments, drawn from reason and Scripture, they appeal to matter of fact. They ask, "Is it not a fact, that those who fall away from justifying grace, who make 'shipwreck of the faith,' that faith whereof cometh present salvation, perish without mercy? How much less can any of those escape, who fall away from sanctifying grace! who make shipwreck of that faith whereby they are cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit! Has there ever been an instance of one or the other of these being renewed again to repentance? If there be any instances of that, one would be inclined to believe that thought of our poet not to be extravagant,—

'E'en Judas struggles his despair to quell,
Hope almost blossoms in the shades of hell.'"

III. These are the principal arguments drawn from reason, from Scripture, and from fact, whereby backsliders are wont to justify themselves in casting away hope; in supposing that God hath utterly "shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure?" I have proposed them in their full strength, that we may form the better judgment concerning them, and try whether each

of them may not receive a clear, full, satisfactory answer.

1. I begin with that argument which is taken from the nature of the thing: "If a man rebel against an earthly prince, he may possibly be forgiven the first time. But if, after a full and free pardon, he should rebel again, there is no hope of obtaining a second pardon: he must expect to die without mercy. Now, if he that rebels again against an earthly king can look for no second pardon, how can he look for mercy who rebels a second time against the great King of heaven and earth?"

2. I answer: This argument, drawn from the analogy between earthly and heavenly things, is plausible, but it is not solid; and that for this plain reason: analogy has no place here: there can be no analogy or proportion between the mercy of any of the children of men, and that of the most high God. "Unto whom will ye liken me, saith the Lord?" Unto whom either in heaven or earth? Who, "what is he among the gods, that shall be compared unto the Lord?" "I have said, Ye are gods," saith the Psalmist, speaking to supreme magistrates; such is your dignity and power, compared to that of common men. But what are they to the God of heaven? As a bubble upon the wave. What is their power in comparison of his power? What is their mercy compared to his mercy? Hence that comfortable word, "I am God, and not man, therefore the house of Israel is not consumed." Because he is God and not man, "therefore his compassions fail not." None then can infer, that because an earthly king will not pardon one that rebels against him a second time, therefore the King of heaven will not. Yea, he will; not until seven times only, or until seventy times seven. Nay, were your rebellions multiplied as the stars of heaven; were they more in number than the hairs of your head; yet, "return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon you; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon."

3. "But does not St. John cut us off from this hope, by what he says of the 'sin unto death?' Is not, 'I do not say that he shall pray for it,' equivalent with, 'I say he shall not pray for it?' And does not this imply, that God has determined not to hear that prayer? that he will not give life to such a sinner, no, not through the prayer of a righteous man?"

4. I answer, "I do not say that he shall pray for it," certainly means, he shall not pray for it. And it doubtless implies that God will not give life unto them that have sinned this sin; that their sentence is passed, and God has determined it shall not be revoked. It cannot be altered even by that "effectual fervent prayer" which, in other cases, "availeth much."

IV But, I ask, first, What is the sin unto death? And, secondly, What is the death which is annexed to it?

1. And, first, What is the sin unto death? It is now many years since, being among a people the most experienced in the things of God of any I had ever seen, I asked some of them, What do you understand by the "sin unto death," mentioned in the First Epistle of St. John? They answered, "If any one is sick among us, he sends for the elders of the church; and they pray over him, and the prayer of faith saves the sick, and the Lord raises him up. And if he hath committed sins, which God was punishing by that sickness, they are forgiven him. But sometimes none of us can pray that God would raise him up. And we are constrained to tell him, We are afraid that you have sinned 'a sin unto death;' a sin that God has determined to punish with death: we cannot pray for your recovery. And we have never yet known an instance of such a person recovering."

2. I see no absurdity at all in this interpretation of the word. It seems to be one meaning (at least) of the expression, "a sin unto death;" a sin which God is determined to punish by the death of the sinner. If, therefore, you have sinned a sin of this kind, and your

sin has overtaken you; if God is chastising you by some severe disease, it will not avail to pray for your life; you are irrevocably sentenced to die. But observe! This has no reference to eternal death. It does by no means imply that you are condemned to die the second death. No; it rather implies the contrary: the body is destroyed, that the soul may escape destruction. I have myself, during a course of many years, seen numerous instances of this. I have known many sinners, (chiefly notorious backsliders from high degrees of holiness, and such as had given great occasion to the enemies of religion to blaspheme,) whom God has cut short in the midst of their journey; yea, before they had lived out half their days. These, I apprehend, had sinned "a sin unto death;" in consequence of which they were cut off, sometimes more swiftly, sometimes more slowly, by an unexpected stroke. But in most of these cases it has been observed that "mercy rejoiced over judgment." And the persons themselves were fully convinced of the goodness as well as justice of God. They acknowledged that he destroyed the body in order to save the soul. Before they went hence, he healed their backsliding. So they died, that they might live for ever.

3. A very remarkable instance of this occurred many years ago. A young collier in Kingswood, near Bristol, was an eminent sinner, and afterwards an eminent saint. But, by little and little, he renewed his acquaintance with his old companions, who by degrees wrought upon him till he dropped all his religion, and was twofold more a child of hell than before. One day he was working in a pit with a serious young man, who suddenly stopped and cried out, "O Tommy, what a man was you once! How did your words and example provoke many to love and to good works! And what are you now? What would become of you, if you were to die as you are?" "Nay, God forbid," said Thomas; "for then I should fall into hell headlong! Oh, let us cry to God!" They did so for a considerable time, **first the**

one, and then the other. They called upon God with strong cries and tears, wrestling with him in mighty prayer. After some time, Thomas broke out, "Now I know God hath healed my backsliding. I know again, that my Redeemer liveth, and that he hath washed me from my sins with his own blood. I am willing to go to him." Instantly part of the pit caved in, and crushed him to death in a moment. Whoever thou art that hast sinned "a sin unto death," lay this to heart! It may be, God will require thy soul of thee in an hour when thou lookest not for it! But if he doth, there is merey in the midst of judgment: thou shalt not die eternally.

4. "But what say you to that other scripture, namely, the tenth of the Hebrews? Does that leave any hope to notorious backsliders, that they shall not die eternally; that they can ever recover the favour of God, or escape the damnation of hell? 'If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without merey. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace?'

5. "And is not the same thing, namely, the desperate, irrecoverable state of wilful backsliders, fully confirmed by that parallel passage in the sixth chapter? 'It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and partakers of the Holy Ghost,—and have fallen away,—so it is in the original,—'to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.'"

6. These passages seem to me parallel to each other, and deserve our deepest consideration. And in order to understand them, it will be necessary to know, (1.) Who are the persons here spoken of; and (2.) What is

the sin they had committed, which made their case nearly, if not quite desperate.

As to the first, it will be clear to all who impartially consider and compare both these passages, that the persons spoken of herein are those, and those only, that have been justified, that the eyes of their understanding were opened and "enlightened," to see the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. These only "have tasted of the heavenly gift," remission of sin, eminently so called. These "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost," both of the witness and the fruit of the Spirit. This character cannot, with any propriety, be applied to any but those that have been justified.

And they had been sanctified too; at least, in the first degree, as far as all who receive remission of sins. So the second passage expressly: "Who hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing."

7. Hence it follows, that this scripture concerns those alone who have been justified, and at least in part sanctified. Therefore all of you who never were thus "enlightened" with the light of the glory of God; all who never did "taste of the heavenly gift," who never received remission of sins; all who never "were made partakers of the Holy Ghost;" of the witness and fruit of the Spirit;—in a word, all you who never were sanctified by the blood of the everlasting covenant, you are not concerned here. Whatever other passages of Scripture may condemn you, it is certain, you are not condemned either by the sixth or the tenth of the Hebrews. For both those passages speak wholly and solely of apostates from the faith which you never had. Therefore, it was not possible that you should lose it, for you could not lose what you had not. Therefore, whatever judgments are denounced in these scriptures, they are not denounced against *you*. You are not the persons here described, against whom only they are denounced.

8. Inquire we next, What was the sin which the

persons here described were guilty of? In order to understand this, we should remember, that whenever the Jews prevailed on a Christian to apostatize, they required him to declare, in express terms, and that in the public assembly, that Jesus of Nazareth was a deceiver of the people; and that he had suffered no more punishment than his crimes justly deserved. This is the sin which St. Paul, in the first passage, terms emphatically "falling away;" "crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame." This is that which he terms in the second, "counting the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, treading under foot the Son of God, and doing despite to the Spirit of grace." Now, which of you has thus fallen away? Which of you has thus "crucified the Son of God afresh?" Not one: nor has one of you thus "put him to an open shame." If you had thus formally renounced that "only sacrifice for sin," there had no other sacrifice remained; so that you must have perished without mercy. But this is not your case. Not one of you has thus renounced that sacrifice, by which the Son of God made a full and perfect satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Bad as you are, you shudder at the thought: therefore that sacrifice still remains for you. Come, then, cast away your needless fears! "Come boldly to the throne of grace!" The way is still open. You shall again "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

V 1. "But do not the well-known words of our Lord himself cut us off from all hope of mercy? Does he not say, 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall never be forgiven him; neither in this world, nor in the world to come.' Therefore, it is plain, if we have been guilty of this sin, there is no room for mercy. And is not the same thing

repeated by St. Mark, almost in the same words? 'Verily I say unto you,' (a solemn preface! always denoting the great importance of that which follows,) 'All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is under the sentence of eternal damnation.'"

2. How immense is the number in every nation throughout the Christian world of those who have been more or less distressed on account of this scripture! What multitudes in this kingdom have been perplexed above measure upon this very account! Nay, there are few that are truly convinced of sin, and seriously endeavour to save their souls, who have not felt some uneasiness for fear they had committed, or should commit, this unpardonable sin. What has frequently increased their uneasiness was, that they could hardly find any to comfort them. For their acquaintances, even the most religious of them, understood no more of the matter than themselves; and they could not find any writer who had published any thing satisfactory upon the subject. Indeed, in the "Seven Sermons" of Mr. Russell, which are common among us, there is one expressly written upon it; but it will give little satisfaction to a troubled spirit. He talks *about it and about it*, but makes nothing out: he takes much pains, but misses the mark at last.

3. But was there ever in the world a more deplorable proof of the littleness of human understanding, even in those that have honest hearts, and are desirous of knowing the truth! How is it possible, that any one who reads his Bible can one hour remain in doubt concerning it, when our Lord himself, in the very passage cited above, has so clearly told us what that blasphemy is? "He that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit." (Mark iii. 29, 30.) This then, and this alone, (if we allow our Lord to understand his

own meaning,) is the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost: *the saying he had an unclean spirit*: the affirming that Christ wrought his miracles by the power of an evil spirit; or, more particularly, that "he cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils." Now, have *you* been guilty of this? have *you* affirmed, that he cast out devils by the prince of devils! No more than you have cut your neighbour's throat, and set his house on fire. How marvellously then have you been afraid, where no fear is! Dismiss that vain terror: let your fear be more rational for the time to come. Be afraid of giving way to pride; be afraid of yielding to anger; be afraid of loving the world, or the things of the world; be afraid of foolish and hurtful desires; but never more be afraid of committing the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost! You are no more in danger of doing this, than of pulling the sun out of the firmament.

4. You have then no reason from Scripture for imagining that "the Lord hath forgotten to be gracious." The arguments drawn from thence, you see, are of no weight, are utterly inconclusive. Is there any more weight in that which has been drawn from experience or matter of fact?

5. This is a point which may exactly be determined, and that with the utmost certainty. If it be asked, "Do any real apostates find mercy from God? Do any that have 'made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience,' recover what they have lost? Do you know, have you seen, any instances of persons who found redemption in the blood of Jesus, and afterwards fell away, and yet were restored,—'renewed again to repentance?'" Yea, verily; and not one, or a hundred only, but, I am persuaded, several thousands. In every place where the arm of the Lord has been revealed, and many sinners converted to God, there are several found who "turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them." For a great part of these, "it had been better never to have known the way of righteousness." It only increases their damnation, seeing they

die in their sins. But others there are who "look unto Him they have pierced, and mourn," refusing to be comforted. And, sooner or later, He surely lifts up the light of his countenance upon them; He strengthens the hands that hang down, and confirms the feeble knees; He teaches them again to say, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit rejoiceth in God my Saviour." Innumerable are the instances of this kind, of those who had fallen, but now stand upright. Indeed, it is so far from being an uncommon thing for a believer to fall and be restored, that it is rather uncommon to find any believers who are not conscious of having been backsliders from God, in a higher or lower degree, and perhaps more than once, before they were established in faith.

6. "But have any that had fallen from sanctifying grace been restored to the blessing they had lost?" This also is a point of experience; and we have had the opportunity of repeating our observations during a considerable course of years, and from the one end of the kingdom to the other.

7. And, first, we have known a large number of persons, of every age and sex, from early childhood to extreme old age, who have given all the proofs which the nature of the thing admits, that they were "sanctified throughout;" "cleansed from all pollution of the flesh and spirit;" that they "loved the Lord their God with all their heart, and mind, and soul, and strength;" that they continually "presented" their souls and bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God;" in consequence of which, they "rejoiced evermore, prayed without ceasing, and in every thing gave thanks." And this, and no other, is what we believe to be true, scriptural sanctification.

8. Secondly. It is a common thing for those who are thus sanctified, to believe they cannot fall; to suppose themselves "pillars in the temple of God, that shall go out no more." Nevertheless, we have seen some of the strongest of them, after a time, moved from their stead-

fastness. Sometimes suddenly, but oftener by slow degrees, they have yielded to temptation; and pride, or anger, or foolish desires have again sprung up in their hearts. Nay, sometimes they have utterly lost the life of God, and sin hath regained dominion over them.

9. Yet, thirdly, several of these, after being thoroughly sensible of their fall, and deeply ashamed before God, have been again filled with his love, and not only perfected therein, but stablished, strengthened, and settled. They have received the blessing they had before with abundant increase. Nay, it is remarkable, that many who had fallen either from justifying or from sanctifying grace, and so deeply fallen that they could hardly be ranked among the servants of God, have been restored, (but seldom till they had been shaken, as it were, over the mouth of hell,) and that very frequently in an instant, to all that they had lost. They have, at once, recovered both a consciousness of his favour, and the experience of the pure love of God. In one moment they received anew both remission of sins, and a lot among them that were sanctified.

10. But let not any man infer from this long-suffering of God, that he hath given any one a licence to sin. Neither let any dare to continue in sin, because of these extraordinary instances of Divine mercy. This is the most desperate, the most irrational presumption, and leads to utter, irrecoverable destruction. In all my experience, I have not known one who fortified himself in sin by a presumption that God would save him at the last, that was not miserably disappointed, and suffered to die in his sins. To turn the grace of God into an encouragement to sin, is the sure way to the nethermost hell!

11. It is not for these desperate children of perdition that the preceding considerations are designed; but for those who feel "the remembrance of their sins is grievous unto them, the burden of them intolerable." We set before these an open door of hope; let them go in, and

give thanks unto the Lord ; let them know that "the Lord is gracious and merciful, long-suffering, and of great goodness. Look how high the heavens are from the earth ! so far will he set their sins from them." "He will not always be chiding ; neither keepeth he his anger for ever." Only settle it in your heart, *I will give all for all*, and the offering shall be accepted. Give him all your heart ! Let all that is within you continually cry out, "Thou art my God, and I will thank thee ; thou art my God, and I will praise thee." "This God is my God for ever and ever ! He shall be my guide even unto death."

HYMN.

LORD, and is thine anger gone ?
And art thou pacified ?
After all that I have done,
Dost thou no longer chide ?
Infinite thy mercies are ;
Beneath the weight I cannot move :
Oh ! 'tis more than I can bear,
The sense of pardoning love.

Let it still my heart constrain,
And all my passions sway ;
Keep me, lest I turn again
Out of the narrow way :
Force my violence to be still,
And captivate my every thought ;
Charm, and melt, and change my wil,
And bring me down to nought.

If I have begun once more
Thy sweet return to feel,
If even now I find thy power
Present my soul to heal,—
Still and quiet may I lie,
Nor struggle out of thine embrace;
Never more resist or fly
From thy pursuing grace.

To the cross, thine altar, bind
Me with the cords of love;
Freedom let me never find
From thee, my Lord, to move:
That I never, never more,
May with my much-loved Master part,
To the posts of mercy's door
Oh, nail my willing heart!

See my utter helplessness,
And leave me not alone;
Oh, preserve in perfect peace,
And seal me for thine own:
More and more thyself reveal,
Thy presence let me always find:
Comfort, and confirm, and heal
My feeble, sin-sick mind.

As the apple of an eye
Thy weakest servant keep;
Help me at thy feet to lie,
And there for ever weep:
Tears of joy mine eyes o'erflow,
That I have any hope of heaven.
Much of love I ought to know,
For I have much forgiven.

SERMON LXXXVII.

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

"They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."—1 TIM. vi. 9.

1. How innumerable are the ill consequences which have followed from men's not knowing, or not considering this great truth ! And how few are there even in the Christian world, that either know or duly consider it ! Yea, how small is the number of those, even among real Christians, who understand and lay it to heart ! Most of these too pass it very lightly over, scarce remembering there is such a text in the Bible. And many put such a construction upon it, as makes it of no manner of effect. "They that will be rich," say they, "that is, will be rich at all events ; who will be rich, right or wrong ; that are resolved to carry their point, to compass this end, whatever means they use to attain it ; they 'fall into temptation,' and into all the evils enumerated by the apostle." But truly if this were all the meaning of the text, it might as well have been out of the Bible.

2. This is so far from being the whole meaning of the text, that it is no part of its meaning. The apostle does not here speak of gaining riches unjustly, but of quite another thing ; his words are to be taken in their plain, obvious sense, without any restriction or qualification whatsoever. St. Paul does not say, "They that will be rich *by evil means*, by theft, robbery,

oppression, or extortion; they that will be rich by fraud or dishonest art;" but simply, "they that will be rich:" these, allowing, supposing the means they use to be ever so innocent, "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

3. But who believes that? Who receives it as the truth of God? Who is deeply convinced of it? Who preaches this? Great is the company of preachers at this day, regular and irregular; but who of them all, openly and explicitly, preaches this strange doctrine? It is the keen observation of a great man, "The pulpit is the preacher's stronghold." But who even in his stronghold has the courage to declare so unfashionable a truth? I do not remember that in threescore years I have heard one sermon preached upon this subject. And what author, within the same term, has declared it from the press? at least, in the English tongue? I do not know one. I have neither seen nor heard of any such author. I have seen two or three who just touch upon it; but none that treats of it professedly. I have myself frequently touched upon it in preaching, and twice in what I have published to the world; once in explaining our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, and once in the discourse on the "Mammon of Unrighteousness:" but I have never yet either published or preached any sermon expressly upon the subject. It is high time I should;—that I should at length speak as strongly and explicitly as I can, in order to leave a full and clear testimony behind me, whenever it pleases God to call me hence.

4. Oh, that God would give me to speak right and forcible words; and you to receive them in honest and humble hearts! Let it not be said, "They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words; but they will not do them. Thou art unto them as one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument; for they hear thy words, but do them not!" Oh, that ye may "not be forgetful hearers, but doers of the word,"

that ye may be "blessed in your deed!" In this hope I shall endeavour,

I. To explain the apostle's words. And,

II. To apply them.

But, oh! "who is sufficient for these things?" Who is able to stem the general torrent? to combat all the prejudices, not only of the vulgar, but of the learned and the religious world? Yet nothing is too hard for God! Still his grace is sufficient for us. In his name, then, and by his strength, I will endeavour,

I. To explain the words of the apostle.

1. And, first, let us consider, what it is to be rich. What does the apostle mean by this expression?

The preceding verse fixes the meaning of this: "Having food and raiment," (literally *coverings*; for the word includes lodging as well as clothes,) "let us be therewith content." "But they that will be rich;" that is, who will have more than these; more than food and coverings. It plainly follows, whatever is more than these is, in the sense of the apostle, *riches*; whatever is above the plain necessities, or at most conveniences, of life. Whoever has sufficient food to eat, and raiment to put on, with a place where to lay his head, and something over, is *rich*.

2. Let us consider, secondly, What is implied in that expression, "They that will be rich?" And does not this imply, first, they that desire to be rich, to have more than *food* and *coverings*; they that seriously and deliberately desire more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a place where to lay their head, more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? All, at least, who allow themselves in this desire, who see no harm in it, desire to be rich.

3. And so do, secondly, all those that calmly, deliberately, and of set purpose, *endeavour* after more than food and coverings; that aim at, and endeavour after, not only so much worldly substance as will procure

them the necessities and conveniences of life, but more than this, whether to lay it up, or lay it out in superfluities. All these undeniably prove their "desire to be rich," by their endeavours after it.

4. Must we not, thirdly, rank among those that desire to be rich, all that, in fact, "lay up treasures on earth?" a thing as expressly and clearly forbidden by our Lord as either adultery or murder. It is allowed, (1.) That we are to provide necessities and conveniences for those of our own household: (2.) That men in business are to lay up as much as is necessary for the carrying on of that business: (3.) That we are to leave our children what will supply them with necessities and conveniences after we have left the world: and, (4.) That we are to provide things honest in the sight of all men, so as to "owe no man any thing." But to lay up any more, when this is done, is what our Lord has flatly forbidden. When it is calmly and deliberately done, it is a clear proof of our desiring to be rich. And thus to lay up money is no more consistent with a good conscience, than to throw it into the sea.

5. We must rank among them, fourthly, all who *possess* more of this world's goods, than they use according to the will of the Donor: I should rather say, of the Proprietor; for He only *lends* them to us as stewards, reserving the *property* of them to himself. And, indeed, he cannot possibly do otherwise, seeing they are the work of his hands: he is, and must be, the possessor of heaven and earth. This is his unalienable right; a right he cannot divest himself of. And together with that portion of his goods which he hath lodged in our hands, he has delivered to us a writing, specifying the purposes for which he has intrusted us with them. If, therefore, we keep more of them in our hands than is necessary for the preceding purposes, we certainly fall under the charge of "desiring to be rich:" over and above, we are guilty of burying our Lord's talent in the earth; and on that account are liable to be pronounced wicked, because unprofitable servants.

6. Under this imputation of "desiring to be rich," fall, fifthly, all "lovers of money." The word properly means, those that *delight in money*; those that take pleasure in it; those that seek their happiness therein; that brood over their gold or silver, bills or bonds. Such was the man described by the fine Roman painter, who broke out in that natural soliloquy:—

Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo
Ipse domi simul ac nummos contemplor in arcâ.*

If there are any vices which are not natural to man, I should imagine this is one; as money of itself does not seem to gratify any natural desire or appetite of the human mind; and as, during an observation of sixty years, I do not remember one instance of a man given up to the love of money, till he had neglected to employ this precious talent according to the will of his Master. After this, sin was punished by sin; and this evil spirit was permitted to enter into him.

7. But beside this gross sort of covetousness, the love of money, there is a more refined species of covetousness, censured by the great apostle,—*πλεονεξία*,—which literally means, *a desire of having more*; more than we have already. And those also come under the denomination of "they that will be rich." It is true that this desire, under proper restrictions, is innocent; nay, commendable. But when it exceeds the bounds, (and how difficult is it not to exceed them!) then it comes under the present censure.

8. But who is able to receive these hard sayings? Who can believe that they are the great truths of God? Not many wise, not many noble, not many famed for learning; none, indeed, who are not taught of God. And who are they whom God teaches? Let our Lord

* The following is Francis's translation of these lines from Horace:—

"Let them hiss on,
While, in my own opinion fully blest,
I count my money, and enjoy my chest."—EDR.

answer : "If any man be willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." Those who are otherwise minded will be so far from receiving it that they will not be able to understand it. Two as sensible men as most in England, sat down together, some time since, to read over and consider that plain discourse on "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth." After much deep consideration, one of them broke out, "Positively, I cannot understand it. Pray, do *you* understand it, Mr. L.?" Mr. L. honestly replied, "Indeed, not I. I cannot conceive what Mr. W. means. I can make nothing at all of it." So utterly blind is our natural understanding touching the truth of God.

9. Having explained the former part of the text, "They that will be rich," and pointed out, in the clearest manner I could, the persons spoken of, I will now endeavour, God being my helper, to explain what is spoken of them : "They fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition."

"They fall into temptation." This seems to mean much more than simply, they are tempted. They *enter into the temptation* : they fall plump down into it. The waves of it compass them about, and cover them all over. Of those who thus enter into temptation, very few escape out of it. And the few that do are sorely scorched by it, though not utterly consumed. If they escape at all, it is with the skin of their teeth, and with deep wounds that are not easily healed.

10. They fall, secondly, into "a snare," the snare of the devil, which he hath purposely set in their way. I believe the Greek word properly means a gin, a steel trap, which shows no appearance of danger. But as soon as any creature touches the spring, it suddenly closes ; and either crushes its bones in pieces, or consigns it to inevitable ruin.

11. They fall, thirdly, "into many foolish and hurt-

ful desires :” *ανοητος*,—*silly, senseless, fantastic*; as contrary to reason, to sound understanding, as they are to religion : *hurtful*, both to body and soul, tending to weaken, yea, destroy, every gracious and heavenly temper : destructive of that faith which is of the operation of God ; of that hope which is full of immortality ; of love to God and to our neighbour, and of every good word and work.

12. But what desires are these? This is a most important question, and deserves the deepest consideration.

In general, they may all be summed up in one, the desiring happiness out of God. This includes, directly or remotely, every foolish and hurtful desire. St. Paul expresses it by “loving the creature more than the Creator;” and by being “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” In particular, they are, (to use the exact and beautiful enumeration of St. John,) “the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life;” all of which, the desire of riches naturally tends both to beget and to increase.

13. “The desire of the flesh” is generally understood in far too narrow a meaning. It does not, as is commonly supposed, refer to one of the senses only; but takes in all the pleasures of sense, the gratification of any of the outward senses. It has reference to the *taste* in particular. How many thousands do we find at this day, in whom the ruling principle is, the desire to enlarge the pleasure of tasting? Perhaps they do not gratify this desire in a gross manner, so as to incur the imputation of intemperance; much less so as to violate health, or impair their understanding by gluttony or drunkenness: but they live in a genteel, regular sensuality; in an elegant epicurism, which does not hurt the body, but only destroys the soul; keeping it at a distance from all true religion.

14. Experience shows that the imagination is gratified chiefly by means of the eye: therefore “the desire of the eyes,” in its natural sense, is, the desiring and

seeking happiness in gratifying the imagination. Now, the imagination is gratified either by grandeur, by beauty, or by novelty: chiefly, by the last; for neither grand nor beautiful objects please any longer than they are new.

15. Seeking happiness in *learning*, of whatever kind, falls under "the desire of the eyes;" whether it be in history, languages, poetry, or any branch of natural or experimental philosophy: yea, we must include the several kinds of learning, such as geometry, algebra, and metaphysics. For if our supreme delight be in any of these, we are herein gratifying "the desire of the eyes."

16. "The pride of life," (whatever else that very uncommon expression, *η αλαζονεια του βιου*, may mean) seems to imply chiefly, the *desire of honour*; of the esteem, admiration, and applause of men; as nothing more directly tends both to beget and cherish pride than the honour that cometh of men. And as riches attract much admiration, and occasion much applause, they proportionably minister food for pride, and so may also be referred to this head.

17 *Desire of ease* is another of these foolish and hurtful desires; desire of avoiding every cross, every degree of trouble, danger, difficulty; a desire of slumbering out life, and going to heaven (as the vulgar say) upon a feather-bed. Every one may observe how riches first beget, and then confirm and increase, this desire; making men more and more soft and delicate; more unwilling, and indeed more unable, to "take up their cross daily;" to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and to "take the kingdom of heaven by violencee."

18. Riches, either desired or possessed, naturally lead to some or other of these foolish and hurtful desires; and, by affording the means of gratifying them all, naturally tend to increase them. And there is a near connection between unholy desires, and every other unholy passion and temper. We easily pass from these

to pride, anger, bitterness, envy, malice, revengefulness; to a headstrong, unadvisable, unreprouable spirit: indeed, to every temper that is earthly, sensual, or devilish. All these, the desire or possession of riches naturally tends to create, strengthen, and increase.

19. And by so doing, in the same proportion as they prevail, they “pierce men through with many sorrows;” sorrows from remorse, from a guilty conscience; sorrows flowing from all the evil tempers which they inspire or increase; sorrows inseparable from those desires themselves, as every unholy desire is an uneasy desire; and sorrows from the contrariety of those desires to each other, whence it is impossible to gratify them all. And, in the end, “they drown” the body in pain, disease, “destruction,” and the soul in everlasting “perdition.”

II. 1. I am, in the second place, to apply what has been said. And this is the principal point. For what avails the clearest knowledge, even of the most excellent things, even of the things of God, if it go no farther than speculation, if it be not reduced to practice? He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! And what he hears, let him instantly put in practice. Oh, that God would give me the thing which I long for! that, before I go hence and am no more seen, I may see a people wholly devoted to God, crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them; a people truly given up to God, in body, soul, and substance! How cheerfully should I then say, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace!”

2. I ask, then, in the name of God, Who of you “desire to be rich?” Which of *you* (ask your own hearts in the sight of God) seriously and deliberately desire (and perhaps applaud yourselves for so doing, as no small instance of your *prudence*) to have more than food to eat, and raiment to put on, and a house to cover you? Who of you desires to have more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? Stop! Consider! What are you doing? Evil is before you! Will you rush upon the point of a sword? By the grace of God, turn and live!

3. By the same authority I ask, Who of you are *en-*

deavouring to be rich? to procure for yourselves more than the plain necessities and conveniences of life? Lay, each of you, your hand to your heart, and seriously inquire, "Am I of that number? Am I labouring, not only for what I want, but for more than I want?" May the Spirit of God say to every one whom it concerns, "Thou art the man!"

4. I ask, thirdly, Who of you are, in fact, "laying up for yourselves treasures upon earth?" increasing in goods? adding, as fast as you can, house to house, and field to field? As long as *thou* thus "doest well unto thyself, men will speak good of thee." They will call thee a wise, a prudent man! a man that *minds the main chance*. Such is, and always has been, the wisdom of the world! But God saith unto thee, "'Thou fool!' art thou not 'treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?'"

5. Perhaps you will ask, "But do not you yourself advise, to gain all we can, and to save all we can? And is it possible to do this, without both *desiring* and *endeavouring to be rich*? nay, suppose our endeavours are successful, without actually laying up treasures upon earth?"

I answer, It is possible. You may gain all you can, without hurting either your soul or body; you may save all you can, by carefully avoiding every needless expense; and yet never lay up treasures on earth, nor either desire or endeavour so to do.

6. Permit me to speak as freely of myself as I would of another man. *I gain all I can* (namely, by writing) without hurting either my soul or body. *I save all I can*, not willingly wasting any thing, not a sheet of paper, not a cup of water. I do not lay out any thing, not a shilling, unless as a sacrifice to God. Yet by *giving all I can*, I am effectually secured from "laying up treasures upon earth." Yea, and I am secured from either desiring or endeavouring it, as long as I give all I can. And that I do this, I call all that know me, both friends and foes, to testify.

7. But some may say, "Whether you endeavour it or no, you are undeniably *rich*. You have more than the necessaries of life." I have. But the apostle does not fix the charge, barely on *possessing* any quantity of goods, but on possessing more than we employ according to the will of the Donor.

Two-and-forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny a piece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and, by this means, I unawares became rich. But I never desired or endeavoured after it. And now that it is come upon me unawares, I lay up no treasures upon earth: I lay up nothing at all. My desire and endeavour, in this respect, is, to "wind my bottom round the year." I cannot help leaving my books behind me, whenever God calls me hence; but, in every other respect, my own hands will be my executors.

8. Herein, my brethren, let you that are rich be even as I am. Do you that possess more than food and raiment, ask, "What shall we do? Shall we throw into the sea what God hath given us?" God forbid that you should! It is an excellent talent: it may be employed much to the glory of God. Your way lies plain before your face: if you have courage, walk in it. Having *gained*, in a right sense, *all you can*, and *saved all you can*; in spite of nature, and custom, and worldly prudence, *give all you can*. I do not say, "Be a good Jew; giving a tenth of all you possess." I do not say, "Be a good Pharisee; giving a fifth of all your substance." I dare not advise you to give half of what you have; no, nor three quarters; but all! Lift up your hearts, and you will see clearly in what sense this is to be done. If you desire to be "a faithful and a wise steward," out of that portion of your Lord's goods which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resumption whenever it pleaseth him, (1.) Provide things needful for yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on;

whatever nature moderately requires, for preserving you both in health and strength : (2.) Provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there is an overplus left, then do good to "them that are of the household of faith." If there be an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you *give all you can* ; nay, in a sound sense, all you have. For all that is laid out in this manner is really given to God. You render unto God the things that are God's, not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household.*

9. O ye Methodists, hear the word of the Lord ! I have a message from God to all men, but to *you* above all. For above forty years, I have been a servant to you and to your fathers. And I have not been as a reed shaken with the wind : I have not varied in my testimony. I have testified to you the very same thing, from the first day even until now. But "who hath believed our report?" I fear, not many rich : I fear there is need to apply to some of *you* those terrible words of the apostle : "Go to now, ye rich men ! weep and howl for the miseries which shall come upon you. Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall witness against you, and shall eat your flesh, as it were fire." Certainly it will, unless ye both save all you can, and give all you can. But who of you hath considered this, since you first heard the will of the Lord concerning it ? Who is now determined to consider and practise it ? By the grace of God, begin to-day !

10. O ye lovers of money, hear the word of the Lord ! Suppose ye that money, though multiplied as the sand of the sea, can give happiness ? Then you are "given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie ;"—a palpable lie, confuted daily by a thousand experiments !

* Sermon L., vol. ii. 349, 350.

Open your eyes! Look all around you! Are the richest men the happiest? Have those the largest share of content who have the largest possessions? Is not the very reverse true? Is it not a common observation, that the richest of men are, in general, the most discontented, the most miserable? Had not the far greater part of them more content, when they had less money? Look into your own breasts. If you are increased in goods, are you proportionally increased in happiness? You have more substance; but have you more content? You know that in seeking happiness from riches, you are only striving to drink out of empty cups. And let them be painted and gilded ever so finely, they are empty still.

11. O ye that *desire or endeavour to be rich*, hear ye the word of the Lord! Why should ye be stricken any more? Will not even experience teach you wisdom? Will ye leap into a pit with your eyes open? Why should you any more "fall into temptation?" It cannot be but temptation will beset you, as long as you are in the body. But though it should beset you on every side, why will you *enter into it*? There is no necessity for this: it is your own voluntary act and deed. Why should you any more plunge yourselves *into a snare*, into the trap Satan has laid for you, that is ready to break your bones in pieces; to crush your soul to death? After fair warning, why should you sink any more into "foolish and hurtful desires?" desires as inconsistent with reason as they are with religion itself; desires that have done you more hurt already than all the treasures upon earth can countervail.

12. Have they not hurt you already, have they not wounded you in the tenderest part, by slaekening, if not utterly destroying your "hunger and thirst after righteousness?" Have you now the same longing that you had once for the whole image of God? Have you the same vehement desire as you formerly had, of "going on unto perfection?" Have they not hurt you by weakening your *faith*? Have you now faith's abiding impres-

sion, realizing things to come? Do you endure, in all temptations, from pleasure or pain, "seeing him that is invisible?" Have you every day, and every hour, an uninterrupted sense of his presence? Have they not hurt you with regard to your *hope*? Have you now a hope full of immortality? Are you still big with earnest expectation of all the great and precious promises? Do you now "taste the powers of the world to come?" Do you "sit in heavenly places with Christ Jesus?"

13. Have they not so hurt you, as to stab your religion to the heart? Have they not cooled (if not quenched) your *love to God*? This is easily determined. Have you the same delight in God which you once had? Can you now say,

"I nothing want beneath, above;
Happy, happy in thy love?"

I fear, not. And if your love of God is in anywise decayed, so is also your love of your neighbour. You are then hurt in the very life and spirit of your religion! If you lose love, you lose all.

14. Are not you hurt with regard to your *humility*? If you are increased in goods, it cannot well be otherwise. Many will think you a better, because you are a richer man: and how can you help thinking so yourself? especially, considering the commendations which some will give you in simplicity, and many with a design to serve themselves of you.

If you are hurt in your humility, it will appear by this token: you are not so teachable as you were, not so advisable; you are not so easy to be convinced, not so easy to be persuaded; you have a much better opinion of your own judgment, and are more attached to your own will. Formerly one might guide you with a thread; now one cannot turn you with a cart-rope. You were glad to be admonished or reprov'd; but that time is past. And you now account a man your enemy because he tells you the truth. Oh, let each of you calmly consider this, and see if it be not your own picture!

15. Are you not equally hurt, with regard to your *meekness*? You had once learned an excellent lesson of Him that was meek as well as lowly in heart. When you were reviled, you reviled not again. You did not return railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing. Your love was *not provoked*, but enabled you on all occasions to overcome evil with good. Is this your case now? I am afraid not. I fear you cannot "bear all things." Alas, it may rather be said, you can bear nothing; no injury, nor even affront! How quickly are you ruffled! How readily does that occur, "What! to use *me* so! What insolence is this! How did he dare to do it? I am not now what I was once. Let him know, I am now able to defend myself." You mean, to revenge yourself. And it is much, if you are not willing, as well as able; if you do not take your fellow-servant by the throat.

16. And are you not hurt in your *patience* too? Does your love now "endure all things?" Do you still "in patience possess your soul," as when you first believed? Oh, what a change is here! You have again learned to be frequently out of humour. You are often fretful; you feel, nay, and give way to peevishness. You find abundance of things go so cross, that you cannot tell how to bear them.

Many years ago I was sitting with a gentleman in London, who feared God greatly, and generally gave away, year by year, nine-tenths of his yearly income. A servant came in, and threw some coals on the fire. A puff of smoke came out. The baronet threw himself back in his chair, and cried out, "O Mr. Wesley, these are the crosses I meet with daily!" Would he not have been less impatient, if he had had fifty, instead of five thousand pounds a year?

17. But to return. Are not you, who have been successful in your endeavours to increase in substance, insensibly sunk into softness of mind, if not of body too? You no longer rejoice to "endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ." You no longer "rush

into the kingdom of heaven, and take it as by storm." You do not cheerfully and gladly "deny yourselves, and take up your cross daily." You cannot deny yourself the poor pleasure of a little sleep, or of a soft bed, in order to hear the word that is able to save your souls! Indeed, you "cannot go out so early in the morning; besides, it is dark, nay, cold, perhaps rainy too. Cold, darkness, rain, all these together!—I can never think of it." You did not say so when you were a poor man. You then regarded none of these things. It is the change of circumstances which has occasioned this melancholy change in your body and mind: you are but the shadow of what you were! What have riches done for you?

"But it cannot be expected I should do as I have done. For I am now grown old." Am not I grown old as well as you? Am not I in my seventy-eighth year? Yet by the grace of God, I do not slack my pace yet. Neither would *you*, if you were a poor man still.

18. You are so deeply hurt, that you have nigh lost your zeal for works of merey, as well as of piety. You once pushed on through cold or rain, or whatever cross lay in your way, to see the poor, the sick, the distressed. You went about doing good, and found out those who were not able to find you. You cheerfully crept down into their cellars, and climbed up in their garrets,

"To supply all their wants,
And spend and be spent in assisting his saints."

You found out every stene of human misery, and assisted according to your power:

"Each form of wo your generous pity moved;
Your Saviour's face you saw, and, seeing, loved."

Do you now tread in the same steps? What hinders? Do you fear spoiling your silken coat? Or is there another lion in the way? Are you afraid of eating vermin? And are you not afraid lest the roaring lion

should catch you? Are you not afraid of Him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these, ye have not done it unto me?" What will follow? "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!"

19. In time past, how mindful were you of that word, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart: thou shalt in anywise reprove thy brother, and not suffer sin upon him!" You *did* reprove, directly or indirectly, all those that sinned in your sight. And happy consequences quickly followed. How good was a word spoken in season! It was often as an arrow from the hand of a giant. Many a heart was pierced. Many of the stout-hearted, who scorned to hear a sermon,

"Fell down before his cross subdued,
And felt his arrows dipt in blood."

But which of you now has that compassion for the ignorant, and for them that are out of the way? They may wander on for *you*, and plunge into the lake of fire, without let or hinderance. Gold hath steeled your hearts. You have something else to do.

"Unhelp'd, unpitied let the wretches fall."

20. Thus have I given you, O ye gainers, lovers, possessors of riches, one more (it may be the last) warning. Oh, that it may not be in vain! May God write it upon all your hearts! Though "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven," yet the things impossible with men are possible with God. Lord, speak! and even the rich men that hear these words shall enter thy kingdom; shall "take the kingdom of heaven by violence;" shall "sell all for the pearl of great price;" shall be "crucified to the world, and count all things dung, that they may win Christ!"

SERMON LXXXVIII.

ON DRESS.

“Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of—wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ;
“But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”—1 PET. iii. 3, 4.

1. ST. PAUL exhorts all those who desire to “be transformed by the renewal of their minds,” and to “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God,” not to “be conformed to this world.” Indeed this exhortation relates more directly to the *wisdom* of the world, which is totally opposite to his “good and acceptable and perfect will.” But it likewise has a reference even to the *manners* and *customs* of the world, which naturally flow from its wisdom and spirit, and are exactly suitable thereto. And it was not beneath the wisdom of God to give us punctual directions in this respect also.

2. Some of these, particularly that in the text, descend even to the apparel of Christians. And both this text, and the parallel one of St. Paul, are as express as possible. St. Paul’s words are, (1 Tim. ii. 9, 10,) “I will that women adorn themselves in modest apparel; not—with gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.”

3. “But is it not strange,” say some, “that the all-wise Spirit of God should condescend to take notice of such trifles as these? to take notice of such insignificant trifles, things of so little moment, or rather of none at

all? For what does it signify, provided we take care of the soul, what the body is covered with, whether with silk or sackcloth? What harm can there be in the wearing of gold, or silver, or precious stones, or any other of those beautiful things with which God has so amply provided us? May we not apply to this what St. Paul has observed on another occasion, that ‘every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected?’”

4. It is certain that many who sincerely fear God have cordially embraced this opinion. And their practice is suitable thereto: they make no scruple of conformity to the world, by putting on, as often as occasion offers, either gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. And indeed they are not well pleased with those that think it their duty to reject them; the using of which they apprehend to be one branch of Christian liberty. Yea, some have gone considerably farther; even so far as to make it a point to bring those who had refrained from them for some time to make use of them again, assuring them that it was mere superstition to think there was any harm in them. Nay, farther still: a very respectable person has said, in express terms, “I do not desire that any who *dress plain* should be in our society.” It is, therefore, certainly worth our while to consider this matter thoroughly: seriously to inquire whether there is any harm in the putting on of gold, or jewels, or costly apparel.

5. But, before we enter on the subject, let it be observed, that slovenliness is no part of religion; that neither this, nor any text of Scripture, condemns neatness of apparel. Certainly this is a duty, not a sin. “Cleanliness is,” indeed, “next to godliness.” Agreeably to this, good Mr. Herbert advises every one that fears God:—

“Let thy mind’s sweetness have its operation
Upon thy person, clothes, and habitation.”

And surely every one should attend to this, if he would not have the good that is in him evil spoken of

6. Another mistake, with regard to apparel, has been common in the religious world. It has been supposed by some, that there ought to be no difference at all in the apparel of Christians. But neither these texts, nor any other in the book of God, teach any such thing, or direct that the dress of the master or the mistress should be nothing different from that of their servants. There may, undoubtedly, be a moderate difference of apparel between persons of different stations. And where the eye is single, this will easily be adjusted by the rules of Christian prudence.

7 Yea, it may be doubted, whether any part of Scripture forbids (at least I know not any) those in any nation that are invested with supreme authority, to be arrayed in gold and costly apparel; or to adorn their immediate attendants, or magistrates, or officers, with the same. It is not improbable, that our blessed Lord intended to give countenance to this custom when he said, without the least mark of censure or disapprobation, "Behold, those that wear gorgeous" (splendid) "apparel are in kings' courts." (Luke vii. 25.)

8. What is then the meaning of these scriptures? What is it which they forbid? They manifestly forbid ordinary Christians, those in the lower or middle ranks of life, to be adorned with gold, or pearls, or costly apparel. But why? What harm is there herein? This deserves our serious consideration. But it is highly expedient, or rather absolutely necessary, for all who would consider it to any purpose, as far as is possible to divest themselves of all prejudice, and to stand open to conviction: is it not necessary likewise, in the highest degree, that they should earnestly beseech the Father of Lights, that "by his holy inspiration they may think the things that are right, and by his merciful guidance perform the same?" Then they will not say, no, not in their hearts, (as I fear too many have done,) what the famous Jew said to the Christian, "Thou shalt not persuade me, though thou hast persuaded me."

9. The question is, What harm does it do, to adorn

ourselves with gold, or pearls, or costly array, suppose you can afford it; that is, suppose it does not hurt or impoverish your family.* The first harm it does, is, it engenders pride, and, where it is already, increases it. Whoever narrowly observes what passes in his own heart will easily discern this. Nothing is more natural than to think ourselves better because we are dressed in better clothes; and it is scarce possible for a man to wear costly apparel, without, in some measure, valuing himself upon it. One of the old heathens was so well apprized of this, that, when he had a spite to a poor man, and had a mind to turn his head, he made him a present of a suit of fine clothes.

Eutrapelus cuicumque nocere volebat,
Vestimenta dabat pretiosa.*

He could not then but imagine himself to be as much better as he was finer than his neighbour. And how many thousands, not only lords and gentlemen, in England, but honest tradesmen, argue the same way? inferring the superior value of their persons from the value of their clothes!

10. "But may not one man be as proud, though clad in sackcloth, as another is, though clad in cloth of gold?" As this argument meets us at every turn, and is supposed to be unanswerable, it will be worth while to answer it once for all, and to show the utter emptiness of it. "May not, then, one clad in sackcloth," you ask, "be as proud as he that is clad in cloth of gold?" I answer, Certainly he may: I suppose no one doubts of it. And what inference can you draw from this? Take a parallel case." One man that drinks a cup of wholesome wine, may be as sick as another that drinks poison: but does this prove that the poison has no more tendency to hurt a man than the wine? Or does it

* The following is Boscawen's translation of this quotation from Horace:—

"Eutrapelus, whome'er he chose
To ruin, deck'd in costly clothes."—EDIT.

excuse any man for taking what has a natural tendency to make him sick? Now, to apply: Experience shows that fine clothes have a natural tendency to make a man sick of pride; plain clothes have not. Although it is true, you may be sick of pride in these also, yet they have no natural tendency either to cause or increase this sickness. Therefore, all that desire to be clothed with humility, abstain from that poison.

11. Secondly. The wearing gay or costly apparel naturally tends to breed and to increase vanity. By vanity I here mean, the love and desire of being admired and praised. Every one of you that is fond of dress has a witness of this in your own bosom. Whether you will confess it before man or no, you are convinced of this before God. You know in your hearts, it is with a view to be admired that you thus adorn yourselves; and that you would not be at the pains were none to see you but God and his holy angels. Now the more you indulge this foolish desire, the more it grows upon you. You have vanity enough by nature; but by thus indulging it, you increase it a hundred-fold. Oh, stop! Aim at pleasing God alone, and all these ornaments will drop off.

12. Thirdly. The wearing of gay and costly apparel naturally tends to beget anger, and every turbulent and uneasy passion. And it is on this very account that the apostle places this "outward adorning" in direct opposition to the "ornament of a meek and quiet spirit." How remarkably does he add, "which is in the sight of God of great price!"

"Than gold or pearls more precious far,
And brighter than the morning star."

None can easily conceive, unless himself were to make the sad experiment, the contrariety there is between the "outward adorning," and this inward "quietness of spirit." You never can thoroughly enjoy this, while you are fond of the other. It is only while you sit loose to that "outward adorning," that you can in "pa

tience possess your soul." Then only when you have cast off your fondness for dress, will the peace of God reign in your hearts.

13. Fourthly. Gay and costly apparel directly tends to create and inflame lust. I was in doubt whether to name this brutal appetite; or, in order to spare delicate ears, to express it by some gentle circumlocution. (Like the dean, who, some years ago, told his audience at Whitehall, "If you do not repent, you will go to a place which I have too much manners to name before this good company.") But I think it best to speak out; since the more the word shocks your ears, the more it may arm your heart. The fact is plain and undeniable; it has this effect both on the wearer and the beholder. To the former, our elegant poet Cowley addresses those fine lines:—

"Th' adorning thee with so much art
Is but a barbarous skill;
'Tis like the poisoning of a dart,
Too apt before to kill."

That is, (to express the matter in plain terms, without any colouring,) "You poison the beholder with far more of this base appetite than otherwise he would feel." Did you not *know* this would be the natural consequence of your elegant adorning? To push the question home, Did you not *desire*, did you not *design*, it should? And yet, all the time, how did you

"Set to public view
A specious face of innocence and virtue!"

Meanwhile, you do not yourself escape the snare which you spread for others. The dart recoils, and you are infected with the same poison with which you infected them. You kindle a flame which at the same time consumes both yourself and your admirers. And it is well, if it does not plunge both you and them into the flames of hell!

14. Fifthly. The wearing costly array is directly opposite to the being adorned with good works. Nothing

can be more evident than this; for the more you lay out on your own apparel, the less you have left to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to lodge the strangers, to relieve those that are sick and in prison, and to lessen the numberless afflictions to which we are exposed in this vale of tears. And here is no room for the evasion used before: "I may be as *humble* in cloth of gold, as in sackcloth." If you could be as humble when you choose costly as when you choose plain apparel, (which I flatly deny,) yet you could not be as beneficent,—as plenteous in good works. Every shilling which you save from your own apparel, you may expend in clothing the naked, and relieving the various necessities of the poor, whom ye "have always with you." Therefore, every shilling which you needlessly spend on your apparel, is, in effect, stolen from God and the poor. And how many precious opportunities of doing good have you defrauded yourself of! How often have you disabled yourself from doing good by purchasing what you did not want! For what end did you buy these ornaments? To please God? No; but to please your own fancy, or to gain the admiration and applause of those that were no wiser than yourself. How much good might you have done with that money! and what an irreparable loss have you sustained by not doing it, if it be true that the day is at hand when "every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour!"

15. I pray consider this well. Perhaps you have not seen it in this light before. When you are laying out that money in costly apparel which you could otherwise have spared for the poor, you thereby deprive them of what God, the Proprietor of all, had lodged in your hands for their use. If so, what you put upon yourself you are, in effect, tearing from the back of the naked; as the costly and delicate food which you eat, you are snatching from the mouth of the hungry. For mercy, for pity, for Christ's sake, for the honour of his gospel, **stay your hand! Do not throw this money away!** Do

not lay out on nothing, yea, worse than nothing, what may clothe your poor, naked, shivering, fellow-creature!

16. Many years ago, when I was at Oxford, in a cold winter's day, a young maid (one of those we kept at school) called upon me. I said, "You seem half-starved. Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown?" She said, "Sir, this is all I have!" I put my hand in my pocket; but found I had scarce any money left, having just paid away what I had. It immediately struck me, "Will thy Master say, 'Well done, good and faithful steward?' Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold? O justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures the blood of this poor maid?" See thy expensive apparel in the same light; thy gown, hat, head-dress! Every thing about thee which cost more than Christian duty required thee to lay out is the blood of the poor! Oh, be wise for the time to come! Be more merciful! more faithful to God and man! more abundantly *adorned* (like men and women professing godliness) *with good works*!

17. It is true, great allowance is to be made for those who have never been warned of these things, and perhaps do not know that there is a word in the Bible which forbids costly apparel. But what is *that to you*? You have been warned over and over, yea, in the plainest manner possible. And what have you profited thereby? Do not you still dress like other people of the same fortune? Is not your dress as gay, as expensive as theirs who never had any such warning? as expensive as it would have been, if you had never heard a word said about it? Oh, how will you answer this, when you and I stand together at the judgment-seat of Christ? Nay, have not many of you grown finer as fast as you have grown richer? As you increased in substance, have you not increased in dress? Witness the profusion of ribands, gauze, or linen about your heads. What have you profited then by bearing the reproach of Christ?

by being called Methodists? Are you not as fashionably dressed as others of your rank that are no Methodists? Do you ask, "But may we not as well buy fashionable things as unfashionable?" I answer, Not if they give you a bold, immodest look, as those huge hats, bonnets, head-dresses do. And not if they cost more. "But I can *afford* it." Oh, lay aside for ever that idle, nonsensical word! No Christian can *afford* to waste any part of the substance which God has intrusted him with. How long are you to stay here? May not you to-morrow, perhaps to-night, be summoned to arise and go hence, in order to give an account of this and all your talents to the Judge of quick and dead?

18. How then can it be, that, after so many warnings, you persist in the same folly? Is it not hence? There are still among you some that neither profit themselves by all they hear, nor are willing that others should: and these, if any of you are almost persuaded to dress as Christians, reason, and rally, and laugh you out of it. O ye pretty triflers, I entreat you not to do the devil's work any longer! Whatever ye do yourselves, do not harden the hearts of others. And you that are of a better mind, avoid these tempters with all possible care; and if you come where any of them are, either beg them to be silent on the head, or quit the room.

19. Sixthly. The putting on of costly apparel is directly opposite to what the apostle terms "the hidden man of the heart;" that is, to the whole "image of God," wherein we were created, and which is stamped anew upon the heart of every Christian believer;—opposite to "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," and the whole nature of inward holiness. All the time you are studying this outward adorning, the whole inward work of the Spirit stands still; or, rather, goes back, though by very gentle and almost imperceptible degrees. Instead of growing more heavenly-minded, you are more and more earthly-minded. If you once had fellowship with the Father and the Son, it now gradually declines; and you in-

sensibly sink deeper and deeper into the spirit of the world,—into foolish and hurtful desires, and groveling appetites. All these evils, and a thousand more, spring from that one root,—indulging yourself in costly apparel.

20. Why then does not every one that either loves or fears God, flee from it, as from the face of a serpent? Why are *you* still so conformable to the irrational, sinful customs of a frantic world? Why do you still despise the express commandment of God uttered in the plainest terms? You see the light: why do not you follow the light of your own mind? Your conscience tells you the truth: why do you not obey the dictates of your own conscience?

21. You answer, “Why, universal custom is against me; and I know not how to stem the mighty torrent.” Not only the profane, but the religious world, run violently the other way. Look into, I do not say the theatres, but the churches, nay, and the meetings of every denomination; (except a few old-fashioned Quakers, or the people called Moravians;) look into the congregations in London or elsewhere, of those that are styled gospel ministers; look into Northampton chapel, yea, into the Tabernacle, or the chapel in Tottenham-court-road; nay, look into the chapel in West-street, or that in the City-road; look at the very people that sit under the pulpit, or by the side of it; and are not *those that can afford it*, (I can hardly refrain from doing them the honour of naming their names,) as fashionably adorned, as those of the same rank in other places?

22. This is a melancholy truth. I am ashamed of it: but I know not how to help it. I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that it is not my fault! The trumpet has not “given an uncertain sound” for near fifty years last past. O God! thou knowest I have borne a clear and a faithful testimony. In print, in preaching, in meeting the society, I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. I am therefore

clear of the blood of those that will not hear. It lies upon their own head.

23. I warn you once more, in the name and in the presence of God, that the number of those that rebel against God is no excuse for your rebellion. He hath expressly told us, "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil." It was said of a great, good man, he

"Fear'd not, had Heaven decreed it, to have stood
Adverse against a world, and singly good."

Who of you desire to share in that glorious character? to stand adverse against a world? If millions condemn you, it will be enough that you are acquitted by God and your own conscience.

24. "Nay, I think," say some, "I could bear the contempt or reproach of all the world beside. I regard none but my own relations, those especially that are of my own household. My father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, (and perhaps one that is nearer than they all,) are teasing me continually." This is a trial indeed; such as very few can judge of, but those that bear it. "I have not strength to bear it." No, not of your own, certainly you have not. But there is strength laid up for you on "One that is mighty!" His grace is sufficient for you; and he now sees your case, and is just ready to give it to you. Meantime, remember his awful declaration, touching them that regard man more than God: "He that loveth father or mother, brother or sister, husband or wife, more than me, is not worthy of me."

25. But are there not some among you that did once renounce this conformity to the world, and dress, in every point, neat and plain, suitable to your profession? Why then did you not persevere therein? Why did you turn back from the good way? Did you contract an acquaintance, perhaps a friendship, with some that were still fond of dress? It is no wonder then that you was, sooner or later, moved to "measure back your steps to earth again." No less was to be expected, than

that one sin would lead you on to another. It was one sin to contract a friendship with any that knew not God: for "know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" And this led you back into another, into that conformity to the world from which you had clean escaped. But what are you to do now? Why, if you are wise, escape for your life: no delay: look not behind you! Without loss of time, renounce the cause and the effect together! Now, to-day, before the heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, cut off, at one stroke, that sinful friendship with the ungodly, and that sinful conformity to the world! Determine this day! Do not delay till to-morrow, lest you delay for ever. For God's sake, for your own soul's sake, fix your resolution now!

26. I conjure you all who have any regard for me, show me, before I go hence, that I have not laboured, even in this respect, in vain, for near half a century. Let me see, before I die, a Methodist congregation, full as plain-dressed as a Quaker congregation. Only be more consistent with yourselves. Let your dress be *cheap* as well as plain; otherwise you do but trifle with God, and me, and your own souls. I pray, let there be no costly silks among you, how grave soever they may be. Let there be no Quaker-linen,—proverbially so called, for their exquisite fineness; no Brussels lace; no elephantine hats or bonnets,—those scandals of female modesty. Be all of a piece, dressed from head to foot as persons *professing godliness*; professing to do every thing, small and great, with the single view of pleasing God.

27. Let not any of you who are rich in this world endeavour to excuse yourselves from this by talking nonsense. It is stark, staring nonsense to say, "Oh, I can *afford* this or that." If you have regard to common sense, let that silly word never come out of your mouth. No man living can afford to waste any part of what God has committed to his trust. None can *afford* to throw any part of that food and raiment into the sea.

which was lodged with him on purpose to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked. And it is far worse than simple waste, to spend any part of it in gay or costly apparel. For this is no less than to turn wholesome food into deadly poison. It is giving so much money to poison both yourself and others, as far as your example spreads, with pride, vanity, anger, lust, love of the world, and a thousand "foolish and hurtful desires," which tend to "pierce them through with many sorrows." And is there no harm in all this? O God, arise, and maintain thy own cause! Let not men or devils any longer put out our eyes, and lead us blindfold into the pit of destruction!

28. I beseech you, every man that is here present before God, every woman, young or old, married or single, yea, every child that knows good from evil, take this to yourself. Each of you, for one, take the apostle's advice; at least, hinder not others from taking it. I beseech you, O ye parents, do not hinder your children from following their own convictions, even though you might think they would *look prettier* if they were adorned with such gewgaws as other children wear! I beseech you, O ye husbands, do not hinder your wives! you, O ye wives, do not hinder your husbands, either by word or deed, from acting just as they are persuaded in their own minds! Above all, I conjure you, ye half-Methodists, you that trim between us and the world, you that frequently, perhaps constantly, hear our preaching, but are in no further connection with us; yea, and all you that were once in full connection with us, but are not so now; whatever ye do yourselves, do not say one word to hinder others from receiving and practising the advice which has been now given! Yet a little while, and we shall not need these poor coverings; for this corruptible body shall put on incorruption. Yet a few days hence, and this mortal body shall put on immortality. In the mean time, let this be our only care, "to put off the old man,"—our old nature,— "which is corrupt,"—which is altogether evil,—and to "put on

15

the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." In particular, "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, gentleness, long-suffering." Yea, to sum up all in one word, "put on Christ;" that "when he shall appear, ye may appear with him in glory."

HYMN.

OH, never in these veils of shame,
Sad fruits of sin, my glorying be !
Clothe with salvation, through thy name,
My soul, and let me put on thee !
Be living faith my costly dress,
And my best robe thy righteousness.

Send down thy likeness from above,
And let this my adorning be ;
Clothe me with wisdom, patience, love,
With lowliness and purity,
Than gold and pearls more precious far,
And brighter than the morning star.

SERMON LXXXIX.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY.

* *Covet earnestly the best gifts : and yet I show unto you a more excellent way.*—1 COR. xii. 31.

1. IN the preceding verses, St. Paul has been speaking of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost ; such as healing the sick ; prophesying, in the proper sense of the word, that is, foretelling things to come ; speaking with strange tongues, such as the speaker had never learned ; and the miraculous interpretation of tongues. And these gifts the apostle allows to be desirable ; yea, he exhorts the Corinthians, at least the teachers among them, (to whom chiefly, if not solely, they were wont to be given in the first ages of the church,) to *covet* them *earnestly*, that thereby they might be qualified to be more useful either to Christians or heathens. “ And yet,” says he, “ I show unto you a more excellent way ;” far more desirable than all these put together : inasmuch as it will infallibly lead you to happiness, both in this world and in the world to come : whereas you might have all those gifts, yea, in the highest degree, and yet be miserable both in time and eternity.

2. It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian ; and, from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honour upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased ; very few instances of

the kind were found. The cause of this was not, (as has been vulgarly supposed,) "because there was no more occasion for them," because all the world was become Christians. This is a miserable mistake: not a twentieth part of it was then nominally Christian. The real cause was, "the love of many," almost of all Christians, so called, was "waxed cold." The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other heathens. The Son of Man, when he came to examine his church, could hardly "find faith upon earth." This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian church; because the Christians were turned heathens again, and had only a dead form left.

3. However, I would not at present speak of these, of the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost, but of the ordinary; and these likewise we may "covet earnestly," in order to be more useful in our generation. With this view, we may covet "the gift of *convincing speech*," in order to "sound the unbelieving heart;" and the gift of *persuasion*, to move the affections as well as enlighten the understanding. We may covet *knowledge*, both of the word and of the works of God, whether of providence or grace. We may desire a measure of that *faith* which, on particular occasions, wherein the glory of God or the happiness of men is nearly concerned, goes far beyond the power of natural causes. We may desire an easy elocution, a pleasing address, with resignation to the will of our Lord; yea, whatever would enable us, as we have opportunity, to be useful wherever we are. These gifts we may innocently desire; but there is "a more excellent way."

4. The way of love,—of loving all men for God's sake; of humble, gentle, patient love,—is that which the apostle so admirably describes in the ensuing chapter. And without this, he assures us, all eloquence, all knowledge, all faith, all works, and all sufferings are of no more value in the sight of God than sounding brass or a rumbling cymbal, and are

not of the least avail toward our eternal salvation. Without this, all we know, all we believe, all we do, all we suffer, will profit us nothing in the great day of accounts.

5. But at present I would take a different view of the text, and point out a "more excellent way" in another sense. It is the observation of an ancient writer, that there have been from the beginning two orders of Christians. The one lived an innocent life, conforming in all things, not sinful, to the customs and fashions of the world; doing many good works, abstaining from gross evils, and attending the ordinances of God. They endeavoured, in general, to have a conscience void of offence in their behaviour, but did not aim at any particular strictness, being in most things like their neighbours. The other Christians not only abstained from all appearance of evil, were zealous of good works in every kind, and attended all the ordinances of God, but likewise used all diligence to attain the whole mind that was in Christ, and laboured to walk, in every point, as their beloved Master. In order to this, they walked in a constant course of universal self-denial, trampling on every pleasure which they were not divinely conscious prepared them for taking pleasure in God. They took up their cross daily. They strove, they agonized without intermission, to enter in at the strait gate. This one thing they did, they spared no pains to arrive at the summit of Christian holiness; "leaving the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, to go on to perfection;" to "know all that love of God which passeth knowledge, and to be filled with all the fulness of God."

6. From long experience and observation, I am inclined to think, that whoever finds redemption in the blood of Jesus, whoever is justified, has then the choice of walking in the higher or the lower path. I believe the Holy Spirit at that time sets before him the "more excellent way," and incites him to walk therein; to choose the narrowest path in the narrow way; to aspire

after the heights and depths of holiness,—after the entire image of God. But if he does not accept this offer, he insensibly declines into the lower order of Christians. He still goes on in what may be called “a good way,” serving God in his degree, and finds mercy in the close of life, through the blood of the covenant.

7. I would be far from quenching the smoking flax,—from discouraging those that serve God in a low degree. But I could not wish them to stop here: I would encourage them to come up higher. Without thundering hell and damnation in their ears, without condemning the way wherein they were, telling them it is the way that leads to destruction, I will endeavour to point out to them what is, in every respect, “a more excellent way.”

8. Let it be well remembered, I do not affirm that all who do not walk in this way are in the high road to hell. But this much I must affirm,—they will not have so high a place in heaven as they would have had if they had chosen the better part. And will this be a small loss,—the having so many fewer stars in your crown of glory? Will it be a little thing to have a lower place than you might have had in the kingdom of your Father? Certainly there will be no sorrow in heaven; there all tears will be wiped from our eyes: but if it were possible grief could enter there, we should grieve at that irreparable loss. Irreparable then, but not now. Now, by the grace of God, we may choose the “more excellent way.” Let us now compare this, in a few particulars, with the way wherein most Christians walk.

I. To begin at the beginning of the day. It is the manner of the generality of Christians, if they are not obliged to work for their living, to rise, particularly in winter, at eight or nine in the morning, after having lain in bed eight or nine, if not more, hours. I do not say now, (as I should have been very apt to do fifty years ago,) that all who indulge themselves in this man-

ner are in the way to hell. But neither can I say, they are in the way to heaven, denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily. Sure I am, there is "a more excellent way" to promote health, both of body and mind. From an observation of more than sixty years, I have learned, that men in health require, at an average, from six to seven hours' sleep, and healthy women a little more,—from seven to eight,—in four-and-twenty hours. I know this quantity of sleep to be most advantageous to the body as well as the soul. It is preferable to any medicine which I have known, both for preventing and removing nervous disorders. It is, therefore, undoubtedly, the most excellent way, in defiance of fashion and custom, to take just so much sleep as experience proves our nature to require; seeing this is indisputably most conducive both to bodily and spiritual health. And why should you not walk in this way? Because it is difficult? Nay, with men it is impossible. But all things are possible with God; and by his grace, all things will be possible to *you*. Only continue instant in prayer, and you will find this not only possible, but easy: yea, and it will be far easier to rise early constantly, than to do it sometimes. But then you must begin at the right end: if you would rise early, you must sleep early. Impose it upon yourself, unless when something extraordinary occurs, to go to bed at a fixed hour. Then the difficulty of it will soon be over; but the advantage of it will remain for ever.

II. The generality of Christians, as soon as they rise, are accustomed to use some kind of *prayer*; and probably to use the same form still, which they learned when they were eight or ten years old. Now, I do not condemn those who proceed thus, (though many do,) as mocking God; though they have used the same form, without any variation, for twenty or thirty years together. But surely there is "a more excellent way" of ordering our private devotions. What, if you were to follow the advice given by that great and good man,

Mr. Law, on this subject? Consider both your outward and inward state, and vary your prayers accordingly. For instance: suppose your outward state is prosperous; suppose you are in a state of health, ease, and plenty, having your lot cast among kind relations, good neighbours, and agreeable friends, that love you, and you them; then your outward state manifestly calls for praise and thanksgiving to God. On the other hand, if you are in a state of adversity; if God has laid trouble upon your loins; if you are in poverty, in want, in outward distress; if you are in imminent danger; if you are in pain and sickness; then you are clearly called to pour out your soul before God in such prayer as is suited to your circumstances. In like manner you may suit your devotions to your inward state, the present state of your mind. Is your soul in heaviness, either from a sense of sin, or through manifold temptations? Then let your prayer consist of such confessions, petitions, and supplications as are agreeable to your distressed situation of mind. On the contrary, is your soul in peace? Are you rejoicing in God? Are his consolations not small with you? Then say, with the Psalmist, "Thou art my God, and I will love thee: thou art my God, and I will praise thee." You may, likewise, when you have time, add to your other devotions a little reading and meditation, and perhaps a psalm of praise,—the natural effusion of a thankful heart. You must certainly see, that this is "a more excellent way" than the poor dry form which you used before.

III. 1. The generality of Christians, after using some prayer, usually apply themselves to the *business* of their calling. Every man that has any pretence to be a Christian will not fail to do this; seeing it is impossible that an idle man can be a good man,—sloth being inconsistent with religion. But with what view, for what end, do you undertake and follow your worldly business? "To provide things necessary for myself and my family." It is a good answer, as far as it goes;

but it does not go far enough. For a Turk or a heathen goes so far,—does his work for the very same ends. But a Christian may go abundantly farther. His end in all his labour is, to please God; to do, not his own will, but the will of Him that sent him into the world,—for this very purpose, to do the will of God on earth as angels do in heaven. He works for eternity. He “labours not for the meat that perisheth,” (this is the smallest part of his motive,) “but for that which endureth to everlasting life.” And is not this “a more excellent way?”

2. Again: in what *manner* do you transact your worldly business? I trust, with diligence, whatever your hand findeth to do, doing it with your might; in justice, rendering to all their due, in every circumstance of life, yea, and in mercy, doing unto every man what you would he should do unto you. This is well: but a Christian is called to go still farther,—to add piety to justice; to intermix prayer, especially the prayer of the heart, with all the labour of his hands. Without this, all his diligence and justice only show him to be an honest heathen; and many there are who profess the Christian religion, that go no farther than honest heathenism.

3. Yet again: in what *spirit* do you go through your business? in the spirit of the world, or in the spirit of Christ? I am afraid thousands of those who are called good Christians do not understand the question. If you act in the spirit of Christ, you carry the end you at first proposed through all your work from first to last. You do every thing in the spirit of sacrifice, giving up your will to the will of God; and continually aiming, not at ease, pleasure, or riches, not at any thing “this short-enduring world can give,” but merely at the glory of God. Now, can any one deny, that this is the most excellent way of pursuing worldly business?

IV 1. But these tenements of clay which we bear about us require constant reparation, or they will sink

into the earth from which they were taken, even sooner than nature requires. Daily food is necessary to prevent this, to repair the decays of nature. It was common in the heathen world, when they were about to use this,—to take meat, or even drink,—*libare pateram Jovi*; “to pour out a little to the honour of their god;” although the gods of the heathens were but devils, as the apostle justly observes. “It seems,” says a late writer, “there was once some such custom as this in our own country. For we still frequently see a gentleman, before he sits down to dinner in his own house, holding his hat before his face, and perhaps seeming to say something; though he generally does it in such a manner that no one can tell what he says.” Now what if, instead of this, every head of a family, before he sat down to eat and drink, either morning, noon, or night, (for the reason of the thing is the same at every hour of the day,) were seriously to ask a blessing from God on what he was about to take? yea, and afterward, seriously to return thanks to the Giver of all his blessings? Would not this be “a more excellent way” than to use that dull farce which is worse than nothing; being, in reality, no other than mockery both of God and man?

2. As to the *quantity* of their food, good sort of men do not usually eat to excess; at least, not so far as to make themselves sick with meat, or to intoxicate themselves with drink. And as to the manner of taking it, it is usually innocent, mixed with a little mirth, which is said to help digestion. So far, so good. And provided they take only that measure of plain, cheap, wholesome food, which most promotes health both of body and mind, there will be no cause of blame. Neither can I require you to take that advice of Mr. Herbert, though he was a good man:—

“Take thy meat; think it dust; then eat a bit,
And say with all, Earth to earth I commit.”

This is too melancholy: it does not suit with that cheerfulness which is highly proper at a Christian meal.

Permit me to illustrate this subject with a little story. The king of France, one day pursuing the chase, out-rode all his company, who, after seeking him some time, found him sitting in a cottage, eating bread and cheese. Seeing them, he cried out, "Where have I lived all my time? I never before tasted so good food in my life!" "Sire," said one of them, "you never had so *good sauce* before; for you were never hungry." Now, it is true, hunger is a good sauce: but there is one that is better still; that is, thankfulness. Sure, that is the most agreeable food which is seasoned with this. And why should not yours at every meal? You need not then fix your eye on death; but receive every morsel as a pledge of life eternal. The Author of your being gives you, in this food, not only a reprieve from death, but an earnest that, in a little time, "death shall be swallowed up in victory."

3. The time of taking our food is usually a time of *conversation* also; as it is natural to refresh our minds while we refresh our bodies. Let us consider a little, in what manner the generality of Christians usually converse together. What are the ordinary subjects of their conversation? If it is harmless, (as one would hope it is,) if there be nothing in it profane, nothing immodest, nothing untrue or unkind; if there be no tale-bearing, backbiting, or evil-speaking, they have reason to praise God for his restraining grace. But there is more than this implied in "ordering our conversation aright." In order to this it is needful, first, that "your communication," that is, discourse or conversation, "be good;" that it be materially good, on good subjects; not fluttering about any thing that occurs; for what have you to do with courts and kings? It is not your business to

"Fight o'er the wars, reform the state;"

unless when some remarkable event calls for the acknowledgment of the justice or mercy of God. We *must*, in deed, sometimes talk of worldly things, otherwise

we may as well go out of the world. But it should be only so far as it is needful : then we should return to a better subject. Secondly, let your conversation be "to the use of edifying," calculated to edify either the speaker or the hearers, or both ; to build them up, as each has particular need, either in faith, or love, or holiness. Thirdly, see that it not only gives entertainment, but, in one kind or other, "ministers grace to the hearers." Now, is not this "a more excellent way" of conversing than the harmless way above mentioned?

V 1. We have seen what is the "more excellent way" of ordering our conversation, as well as our business. But we cannot be always intent upon business : both our bodies and minds require some relaxation. We need intervals of diversion from business. It will be necessary to be very explicit upon this head, as it is a point which has been much misunderstood.

2. Diversions are of various kinds. Some are almost peculiar to men, as the sports of the field,—hunting, shooting, fishing,—wherein not many women (I should say ladies) are concerned. Others are indifferently used by persons of both sexes : some of which are of a more public nature, as races, masquerades, plays, assemblies, balls. Others are chiefly used in private houses ; as cards, dancing, and music ; to which we may add, the reading of plays, novels, romances, newspapers, and fashionable poetry.

3. Some diversions, indeed, which were formerly in great request, are now fallen into disrepute. The nobility and gentry, in England at least, seem totally to disregard the once fashionable diversion of hawking ; and the vulgar themselves are no longer diverted by men hacking and hewing each other in pieces at broadsword. The noble game of quarter-staff, likewise, is now exercised by very few. Yea, cudgelling has lost its honour, even in Wales itself. Bear-baiting is also now very seldom seen, and bull-baiting not very often. And it

seems cock-fighting would totally cease in England, were it not for two or three right honourable patrons.

4. It is not needful to say any thing more of these foul *remains of Gothic barbarity*, than that they are a reproach, not only to all religion, but even to human nature. One would not pass so severe a censure on the sports of the field. Let those who have nothing better to do still run foxes and hares out of breath. Neither need much be said about horse-races, till some man of sense will undertake to defend them. It seems a great deal more may be said in defence of seeing a serious tragedy. I could not do it with a clear conscience; at least not in an English theatre, the sink of all profaneness and debauchery: but possibly others can. I cannot say quite so much for balls or assemblies, which, though more reputable than masquerades, yet must be allowed by all impartial persons to have exactly the same tendency. So, undoubtedly, have all public dancings. And the same tendency they must have, unless the same caution obtained among modern Christians which was observed among the ancient heathens. With them, men and women never danced together, but always in separate rooms. This was always observed in ancient Greece, and for several ages at Rome; where a woman dancing in company with men would have at once been set down for a prostitute. Of playing at cards I say the same as of seeing plays. I could not do it with a clear conscience. But I am not obliged to pass any sentence on those that are otherwise minded. I leave them to their own Master: to Him let them stand or fall.

5. But supposing these, as well as the reading of plays, novels, newspapers, and the like, to be quite innocent diversions; yet are there not more excellent ways of diverting themselves for those that love or fear God? Would men of fortune divert themselves in the open air? They may do it by cultivating and improving their lands, by planting their grounds, by laying out, carrying on, and perfecting their gardens and orchards.

At other times they may visit and converse with the most serious and sensible of their neighbours; or they may visit the sick, the poor, the widows, and the fatherless in their affliction. Do they desire to divert themselves in the house? They may read useful history, pious and elegant poetry, or several branches of natural philosophy. If you have time, you may divert yourself by music, and perhaps by philosophical experiments. But above all, when you have once learned the use of prayer, you will find, that as

“That which yields or fills
All space, the ambient air, wide interfused,
Embraces round this flord earth,”

so will this, till through every space of life it be interfused with all your employments, and wherever you are, whatever you do, embrace you on every side. Then you will be able to say boldly,—

“With me no melancholy void,
No moment lingers unemploy’d
Or unimproved below:
My weariness of life is gone,
Who live to serve my God alone,
And only Jesus know.”

VI. One point only remains to be considered, that is, the use of money. What is the way wherein the generality of Christians employ this? And is there not “a more excellent way?”

1. The generality of Christians usually set apart something yearly, perhaps a tenth or even one-eighth part of their income, whether it arise from yearly revenue, or from trade, for charitable uses. A few I have known, who said, like Zaccheus, “Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.” Oh, that it would please God to multiply these friends of mankind, these general benefactors! But,

2. Besides those who have a stated rule, there are thousands who give large sums to the poor; especially when any striking instance of distress is represented to them in lively colours.

3. I praise God for all of you who act in this manner. May you never be weary of well-doing! May God restore what you give, sevenfold, into your own bosom! But yet I show unto you "a more excellent way."

4. You may consider yourself as one in whose hands the Proprietor of heaven and earth, and all things therein, has lodged a part of his goods, to be disposed of according to his direction. And his direction is, that you should look upon yourself as one of a certain number of indigent persons, who are to be provided for out of that portion of his goods wherewith you are intrusted. You have two advantages over the rest: the one, that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" the other, that you are to serve yourself first, and others afterwards. This is the light wherein you are to see yourself and them. But to be more particular: first, if you have no family, after you have provided for yourself, give away all that remains; so that

"Each Christmas you accounts may clear,
And wind your bottom round the year."

This was the practice of all the young men at Oxford who were called Methodists. For example: one of them had thirty pounds a year. He lived on twenty-eight, and gave away forty shillings. The next year receiving sixty pounds, he still lived on twenty-eight, and gave away two-and-thirty. The third year he received ninety pounds, and gave away sixty-two. The fourth year he received a hundred and twenty pounds. Still he lived as before on twenty-eight, and gave to the poor ninety-two. Was not this "a more excellent way?" Secondly, if you have a family, seriously consider before God, how much each member of it wants, in order to have what is needful for life and godliness. And in general, do not allow them less, nor much more, than you allow yourself. Thirdly, this being done, fix your purpose, to "gain no more." I charge you, in the name of God, do not increase your substance! As it comes, daily or yearly, so let it go: otherwise you "lay up treasures

upon earth." And this our Lord as flatly forbids as murder and adultery. By doing it, therefore, you would "treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

5. But suppose it were not forbidden, how can you, on principles of reason, spend your money in a way which God may *possibly forgive*, instead of spending it in a manner which he will *certainly reward*? You will have no reward in heaven for what you *lay up*; you will, for what you *lay out*. Every pound you put into the earthly bank is sunk: it brings no interest above. But every pound you give to the poor is put into the bank of heaven. And it will bring glorious interest; yea, and, as such, will be accumulating to all eternity.

6. Who then is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him resolve this day, this hour, this moment, the Lord assisting him, to choose in all the preceding particulars the "more excellent way:" and let him steadily keep it, both with regard to sleep, prayer, work, food, conversation, and diversions, and particularly, with regard to the employment of that important talent, money. Let *your* heart answer to the call of God, "From this moment, God being my helper, I will lay up no more treasure upon earth; this one thing I will do, I will lay up treasure in heaven: I will render unto God the things that are God's: I will give him all my goods, and all my heart!"

